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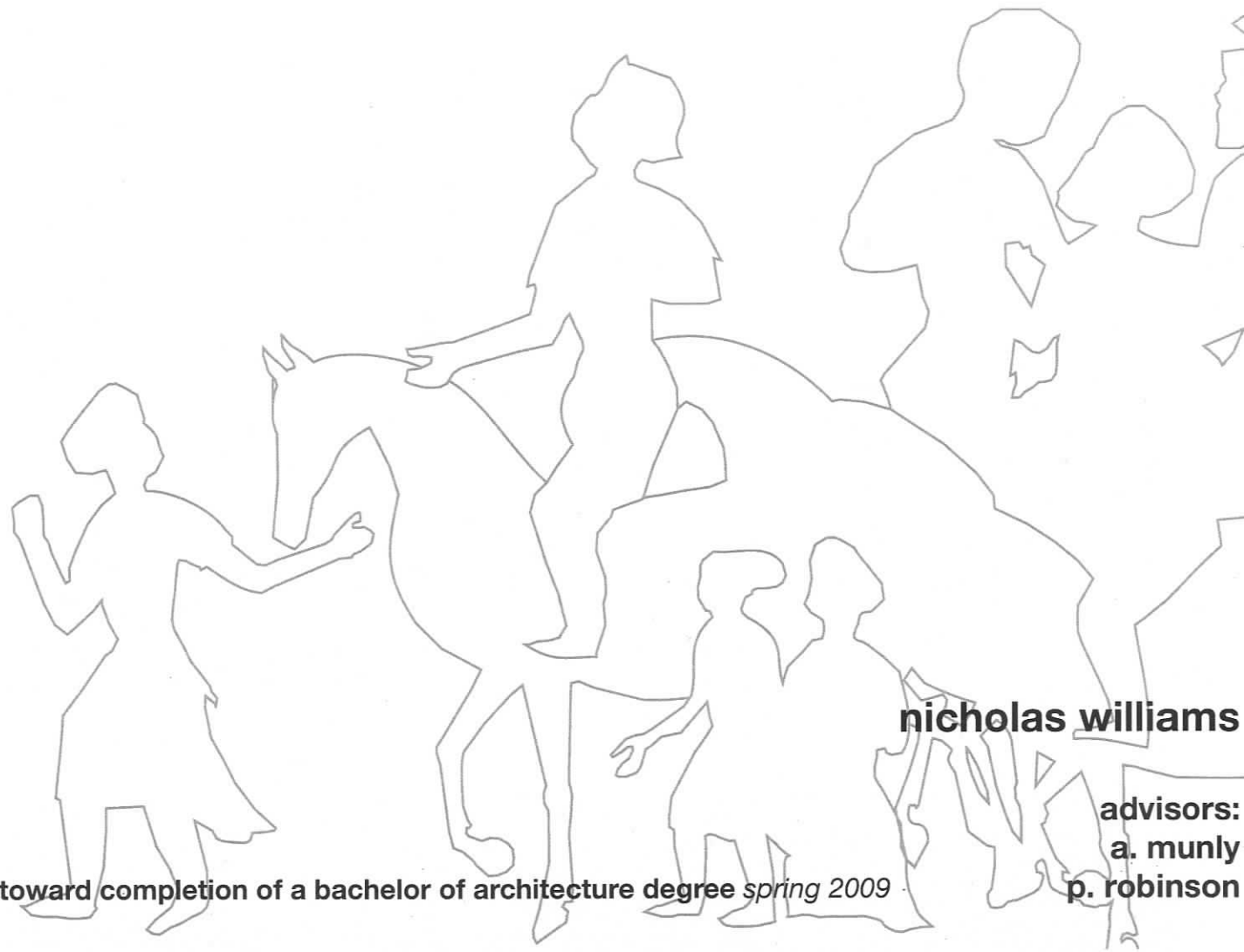
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surface *culture*

a museum of contemporary persian art for los angeles



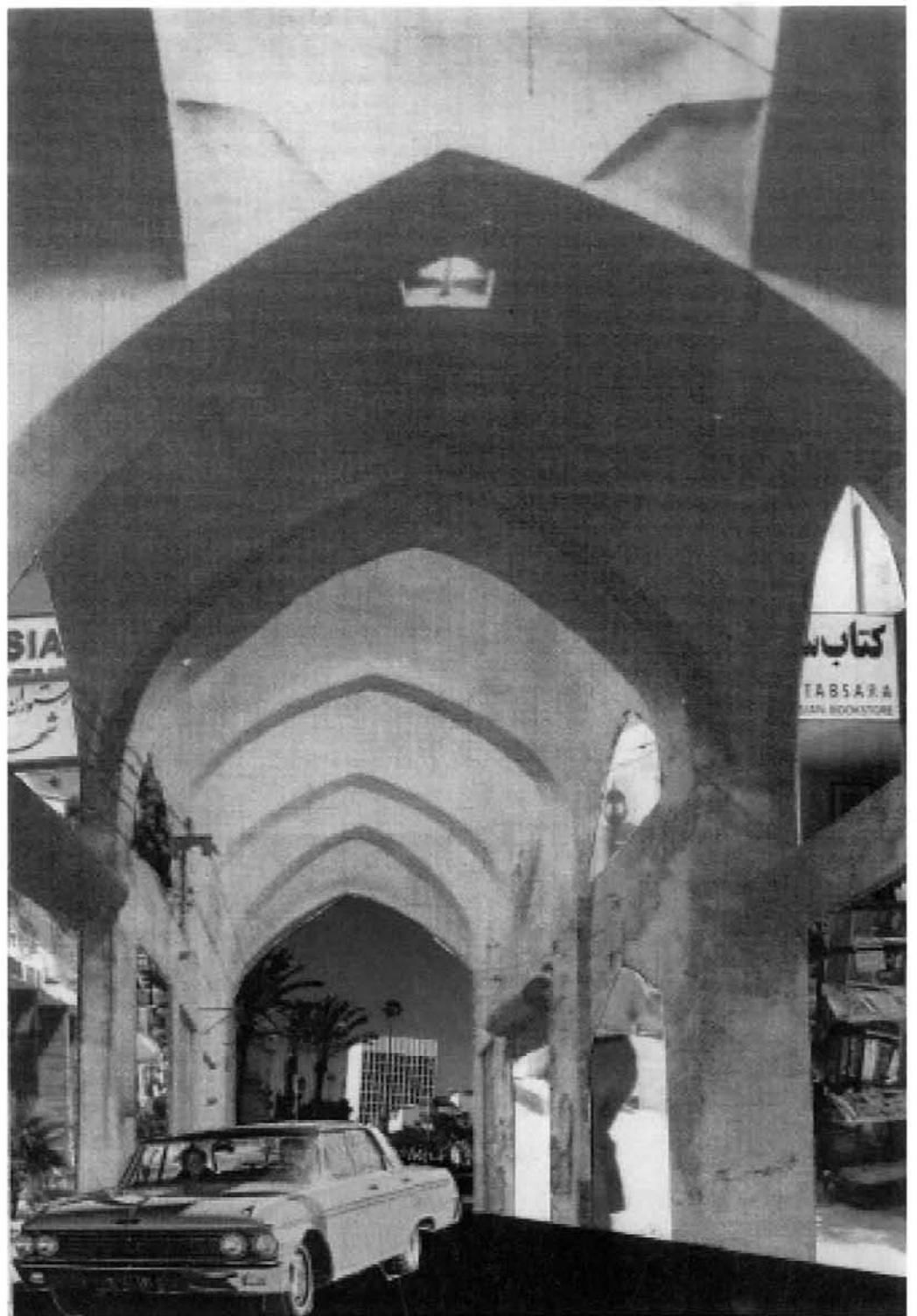
nicholas williams

advisors:

a. munly

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thesis submitted toward completion of a bachelor of architecture degree spring 2009



*"the car in the bazaar"
(existing conditions)*

table of contents

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 | contention |
| 2 | the issues:overview |
| 5 | context |
| 6 | revolution+diaspora |
| 10 | westwood |
| 20 | tehrangeles |
| 35 | theory |
| 36 | the paintings |
| 48 | the flattened condition in architecture |
| 54 | precedents |
| 62 | the collection |
| 76 | site(s) |
| 83 | design |
| 95 | bibliography |

Westwood Boulevard, Los Angeles, is the economic and social hub of the local Iranian expatriate community, the largest in the world. For the past thirty years, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Persian influence on Westwood Boulevard has grown continuously. The transforming and co-opting of existing spaces as well as the construction of new ones has placed (a certain) primacy on conditions of surface and visual + spatial layering. Text, specifically farsi script, is employed in a multifaceted manner; words act as advertising, assertion of identity, surface texture, and in some cases, a visual screen.

Primacy of surface and script as screen and texture are, along with visual distortion and flattening, embedded in the persian artistic tradition. To build upon these concepts and conditions through the medium of a *museum of contemporary persian art* will allow for a synthesis of the conditions produced by the acquisition of the strip with a visual manifestation of the compositional tendencies of Persian art. The result of this synthesis is an institution that furthers the central role that Westwood Boulevard plays for the local Persian community.

The intention of this study is to look at Los Angeles' "Little Persia", a semi-urban commercial strip that has been co-opted by the local Persian community into their hub, through an analytical lens that is both architectural and anthropological.

What is important to consider here is that this is a community that straddles two cultures; as one shopkeeper responded to me when I asked about whether the strip was like Iran: "it is not Iran, but it is not America either; *it is like us, the in-between*"

The "in-between" is precisely the significance of the strip; it is home to numerous book, music and video stores; it is the conduit of Persian contemporary entertainment and literature feeding into Los Angeles. As the disseminator of culture for a specific demographic, it serves a central role, and takes on the role of the cultural center in an unofficial, non-monumental sense.

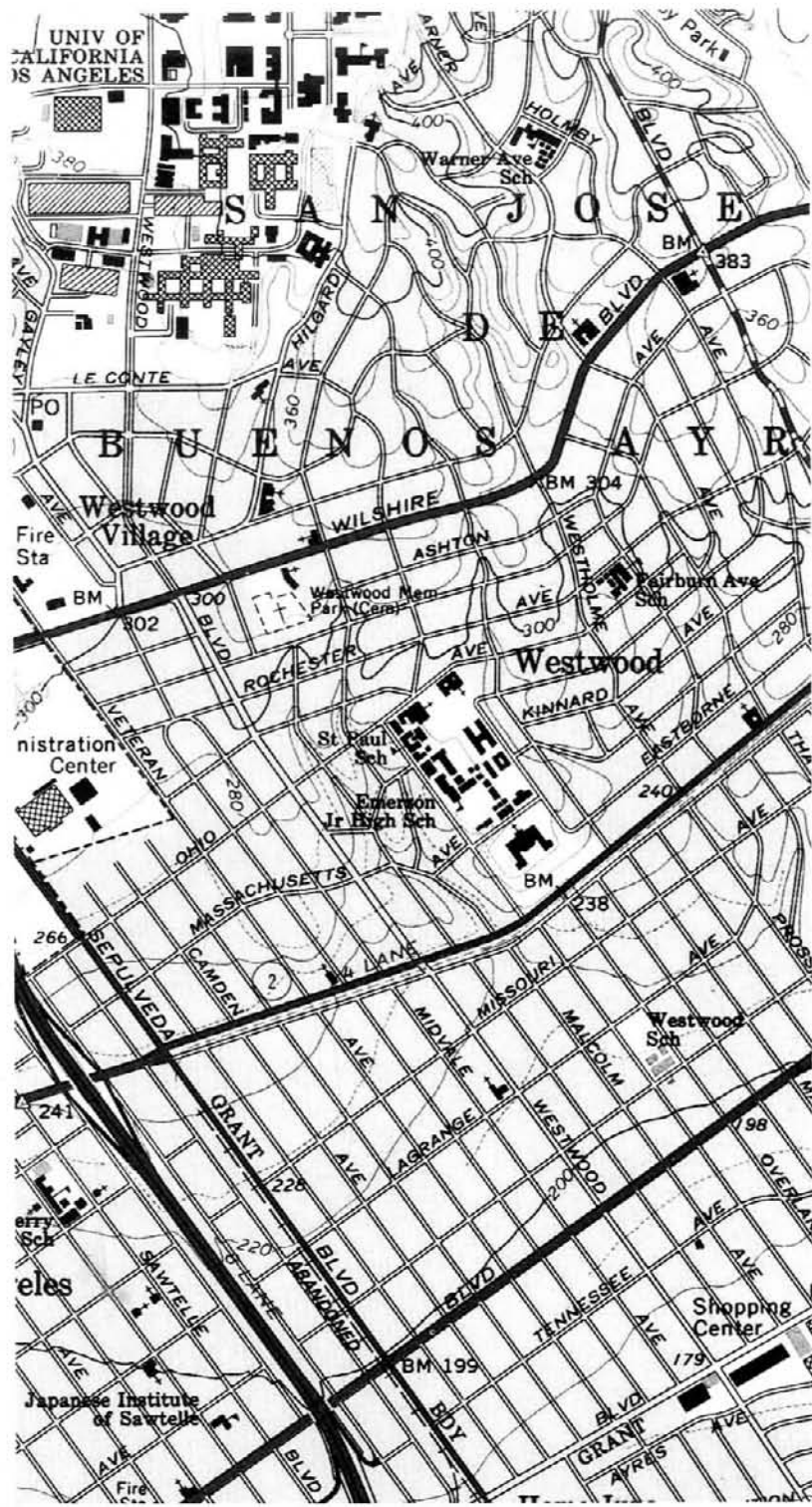
At the same time, contemporary artistic development within Iran is vastly underrepresented in the strip, as well as in Los Angeles in general. While there are a few small galleries scattered throughout the region and the occasional traveling exhibition, the potential for this to have a larger presence, and become a true community institution that both is in harmony with the community and surroundings while serving as a bold assertion of the prominence of the local community; an anti-monumental monument.



This is to be achieved through the dispersion of museum programs throughout the strip, much like the persian community throughout the world; literal fragmentation (the world) with a central “hub” (iran). The sites chosen are also the “in-between”, the “eroded corners” at intersections, the billboard, the parking lot. The residuals of the Los Angeleno landscape.

The language is to be derived from the ideas of surface, texture, frontality, centrality and “flattening” evident in both the Westwood strip as well as in Persian painting of the Safavid era. To that extent, this thesis is concerned with the image, both as a document of a space or event, but also with relation to its own formal qualities as a “flattened object”. The analysis of Safavid paintings, as well as of images of Westwood Boulevard with regard to the aforementioned qualities sets up a system of devices that can be employed to create the complex, derivative surface. Contemporary persian art is generally an appropriation, torquing and troping of the traditional arts of Iran; the collection ought be represented in the expressive surface.

Surface is to be the driver; this is a context where facadism and frontality have a certain supremacy in terms of the overall hierarchy of the building exterior. The tendency towards a composed plane that the plan develops from is evident in both Persian-American architecture as well as the Safavid paintings; the architectural dilemma is the disjoint between image and space.



context

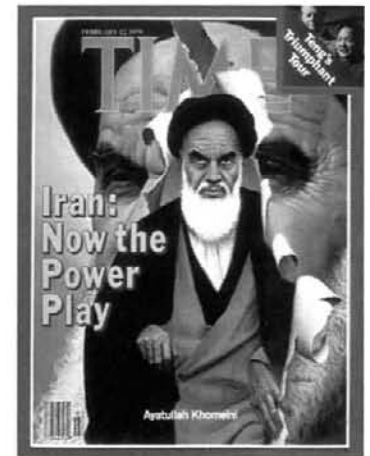
revolution + diaspora

"we look to the iranian revolution, in my opinion, as the third great revolution in history"

- Marvin Zonis in *Sacred rage: The Crusade of Modern Islam*

Tehran in the 1960's and 70's was a vibrant, cosmopolitan city with a thriving art and music scene. Recent changes in Iran's economy had provided brought an influx of oil money and with it, modernization. Shah Reza Pahlavi began to look to the west for inspiration as well as assistance in the task of "westernizing" what was at the time a severely under-developed country. A close ally of the United States, and frequently recognized by American presidents for his opposition to communism, the shah was not nearly as well liked at home as he was abroad. As a proponent of a secular republic, he came under fire from the clergy. Leftist and Nationalist groups criticized his government for its corruption, political oppression, and violation of the Iranian Constitution. The majority of the country at the time was religious and rather traditional people for whom the opinions of the clergy held great importance.

By the mid 1970's, it became apparent that the oil money coming into Iran was not modernizing the country as a whole, but rather leading to increases in inflation, and a growing gap between the rich and poor and urban and rural. In a move that alienated the religious right even further, the Shah changed the first year of the Iranian calendar from hijri(islamic) to the ascension of the throne by Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian empire. In 1977, the newly inaugurated American president Jimmy Carter created a new Office of Human Rights, which contacted the shah to remind him of the importance of human rights and freedoms. Always wanting to keep the americans' favor (as the CIA assassinated prime minister Mohammed Mosadeq, who attempted to overthrow the shah in 1953), Shah Pahlavi responded by granting amnesty to 357 political prisoners, and allowing foreign aid societies to visit Iranian prisons. This apparent "lightening up" of restrictions by the shah emboldened the people of Iran to speak out against the government, but for what new solution?



"In particular, we discover an atmosphere of overwhelming confusion. As protest mounted against the shah, Iranians had no idea what was going to happen. Would the Shah's regime fall? Would protest be suppressed, or peter out? Iranians polled friends and strangers ceaselessly to find answers to these questions, yet the answers careened unpredictably. In such momentous times, Iranians could not even predict their own actions, much less those of their compatriots."

- Charles Kurzman in *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*

The beginning of the end of the Shah's government was in January of 1978 in the city of Qom, where a major demonstration occurred in response to a libelous story in the official press about the Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini was a muslim cleric who was an outspoken critic of the Shah's reforms of the 1960's. In 1963, he denounced the Shah, calling him a "wretched, miserable man", comments which led to his arrest on June 5, 1963, which in turn led to three days of major riots throughout Iran. Khomeini was later sent into exile, and was not in Iran at the time of the demonstration in Qom, which quickly turned violent, and took around 70 lives.

The demonstration in Qom sparked others, many with fatalities. Prior to the major demonstration at Qom, there had been small but visible opposition groups, composed primarily of the secular, liberal, urban middle class. With the continued demonstrations around the country, the supporters trended more rural, less wealthy, and more religious. The Shah made contact with the United States in the hope that the American government could be of assistance, but the Americans did not outwardly offer to help, and the internal conditions of Iran continuing to deteriorate throughout the rest of the year. By September, martial law was imposed, and all demonstrations were banned. On September 8th, a massive protest in central Tehran broke out, with government security forces shooting and killing many demonstrators. This event came to be known as "Black Friday", partially due to the number of fatalities, but also due to the fact that this appears to be the moment that reconciliation between the Shah and the opposition became impossible, as the perceived police brutality alienated all but the shah's most loyal followers.

On January 17th, 1979, the Shah and his wife, Empress Farah, left Iran.

"In theory, the government is in charge, but in reality, it is Khomeini who is in charge- he with his Revolutionary Council, his revolutionary Komitehs, and his relationship with the masses. They put a knife in my hands, but it's a knife with only a handle. Others are holding the blade."

- Mehdi Barzagan, post-revolution prime minister

On February 1, 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran after fourteen years in exile. He was brought back by political moderates to create a "vatican-like state" in the city of Qom, and to help with preserving the Iranian Constitution. With Khomeini's return, however, the direction that the new government went was anything but moderate. Khomeini set up a new government system in which there were a number of offices and councils, but ultimately, the authority rested in the hands of the supreme leader, always a cleric, and until his death, Khomeini himself. This was included in Iran's new constitution, which was ratified on December 3, 1979.

With the new government came sharia. In what was for the most part a secular monarchy, a theocracy was imposed. Censorship became much more widespread than ever before. While under the Shah, there was some censorship of the news, under the new regime, music, literature and art all came under fire, not just in terms of political message, but also in terms of content; things that were considered "western" and un-islamic were banned. Women were forced by law to follow Islamic dress codes; "bad hijab" (immodest headscarf) is considered a crime, beaches and buses became segregated by gender, and women were banned from being judges. Political opponents of the regime were tortured and killed.

To many Iranians, these changes were too much to live with.

"never before the 1979 revolution were such a large number of Iranians, including a disproportionate number of the well-educated and intellectuals, forced to leave the country or prevented from returning"

- Ashgar Fathi in *Iranian Refugees and Exiles Since Khomeini*

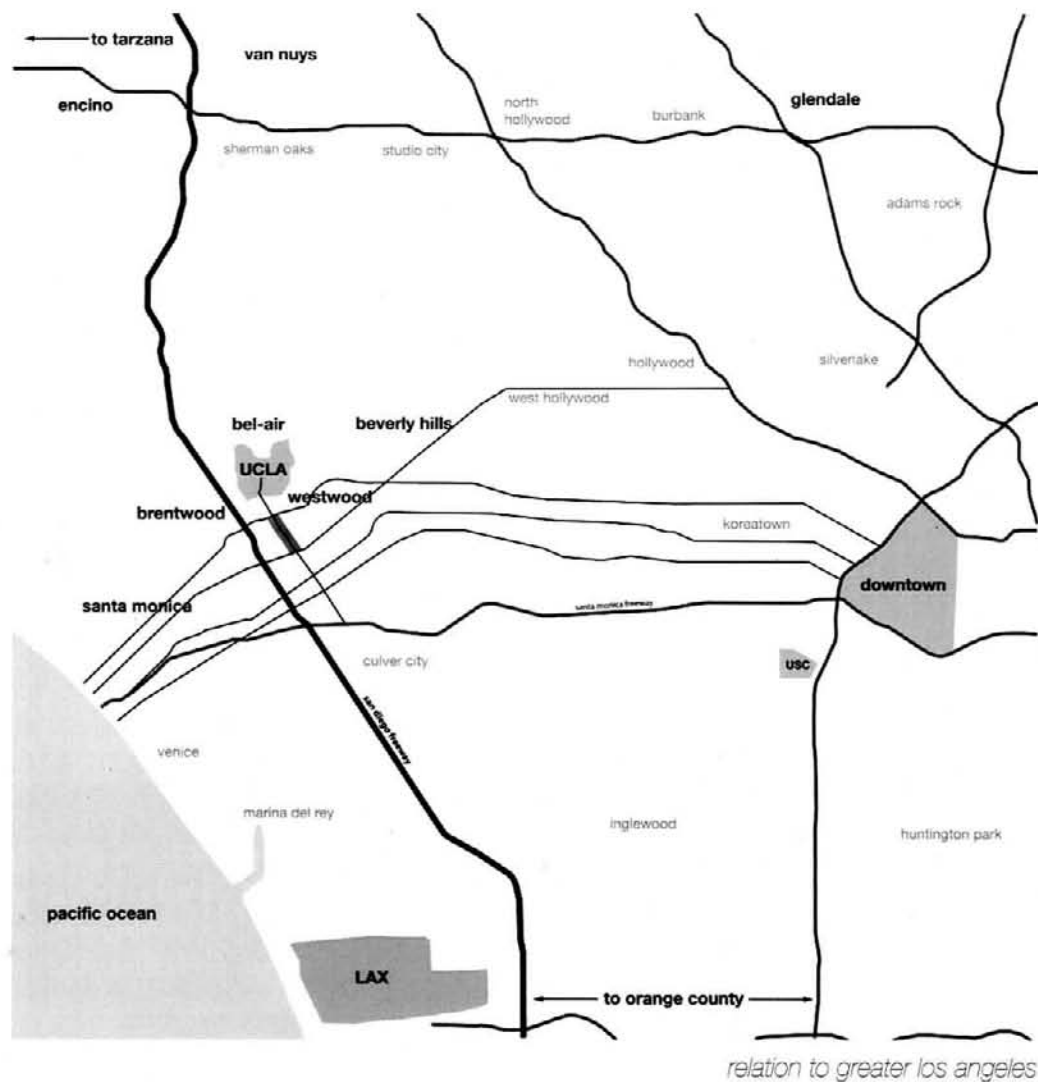
The educated class was the group most compelled, for a variety of reasons, to leave Iran. The new regime did not take kindly to the university faculty, as they were seen to be proponents of secular liberal ideas, and many of Iran's other elites were considered to be sympathizers of the Shah, and were therefore at risk of being persecuted should they choose to stay in Iran.

The Iranians compelled to leave Iran generally sought out certain cities and metropolitan areas. Close to home, many chose to emigrate to Dubai (300,000), as well as Frankfurt, London (100,000), Stockholm and Paris. Across the Atlantic, popular destinations included Washington, D.C. and Toronto. By far and wide, the largest concentration of Iranians who chose to move abroad (est. 600,000-900,000) made Los Angeles their destination.

In Los Angeles, affectionately known as "Tehrangeles", the Iranian community is sizable and influential. Iranians in America are the most well-educated and highest paid ethnic group, and nowhere is this more evident in Los Angeles. The exclusive suburb of Beverly Hills formerly had an Iranian mayor, Jimmy Delshad, and is the only municipality in America to print ballots in both English and Farsi. Just down the road from Beverly Hills, and adjacent to the UCLA campus, is the commercial and social hub of Persian Los Angeles: Westwood Boulevard, also known as "Little Persia", or "Little Tehran".



protester at westwood federal building, 1980's



westwood

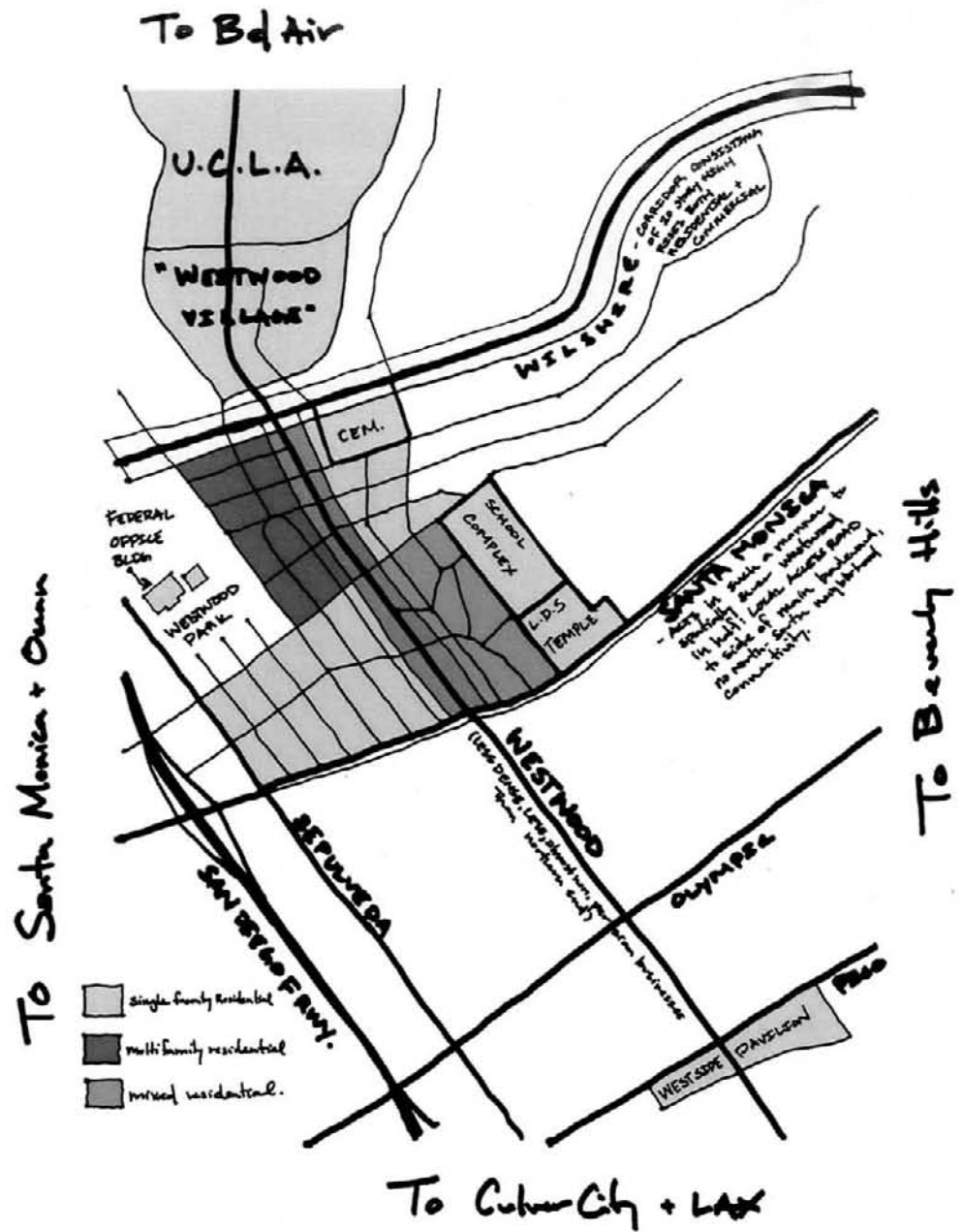
Los Angeles is a linear city. Coming of age after the advent (and proliferation) of the car, the general composition of the city, other than the central business district, is that of long, commercial avenues creating large pockets in-between which are filled with houses and apartment buildings. With a few notable exceptions where the topography prohibits it, the streets are all set up in a gridded format. There are a series of primary avenues which run between downtown and the beach in Santa Monica: Wilshire, Santa Monica, Olympic, and Pico; the lifeblood of the city flows down these avenues with major cultural institutions and attractions being located on these roads or nearby. A number of north-south avenues bisect these streets at numerous points, many with their own distinct cultural identity.

One of these cross streets is Westwood Boulevard. Beginning just north of Wilshire on the UCLA campus and terminating a half mile south of Pico, Westwood Boulevard is a typical 1930's era commercial strip with many later alterations. The buildings are generally one or two stories, with a few later three story structures, and in many instances the street corner buildings have been demolished for parking lots or other parking-centric businesses such as dry cleaners and convenience stores. This is unfortunate, as the corners are essential to maintaining the spatial coherence of the street.

Following Westwood Boulevard from north to south, it becomes apparent that the density of the buildings on the street decreases as one travels southward, from Wilshire to Pico. With this decrease in density comes a decrease in overall pedestrian activity as parking becomes more frequent and the "street wall" of buildings becomes more eroded by the accommodations for cars. Generally, the northern end of Westwood Boulevard seems more "alive".

It is the part of Westwood Boulevard between Wilshire and Santa Monica that is generally considered "Little Persia". While there are some Persian businesses on the blocks directly south of Santa Monica, the boulevard itself as well as the intersection, which is composed of two gas stations and a car wash, is a difficult and uninviting obstacle to cross, and for the most part, severs the blocks south of Santa Monica from the blocks north. For the purposes of analysis, it will be these northern blocks that will be focused upon as the area of interest.

Immediately behind the commercial buildings that sit on Westwood is an alleyway, and to the other side, both single family houses and apartment buildings. The blocks are effectively bisected into commercial/residential, with the residential buildings fronting on a wholly different kind of street, one that is of a much smaller scale and slower traffic speed. These buildings vary in vintage from the 1930's to new construction. To a certain extent, there has been a recent increase of density, with smaller, single family homes being torn down in favor of apartment buildings which are built out to the property lines.



diagrammatic map of little persia and adjacent environs

*westwood boulevard looking north
from massachusetts ave*



*westwood boulevard looking north
from between ohio and holman
avenues*



*westwood boulevard looking
south from lindbrook avenue*



This densification of the neighborhood is indicative of a recent shift in development patterns in Los Angeles. As a "first growth" city, that is constrained by geography, L.A. is almost built out. As a result, existing low-density development, parking lots, and otherwise "unbuildable" spaces are being considered as sites for development. This is compounded in the Westwood area by the fact that it is one of the most desirable areas in the city of Los Angeles in which to live, due to its high property values, safety, and proximity to UCLA, Beverly Hills, Century City, Santa Monica, freeways, and the beach. It is also an area underserved by public transportation; resulting in the quandary that increased densification will not significantly decrease automobile traffic.

Automobile traffic is one of the most significant challenges on Westwood Boulevard; it is a major thru road, as it connects the major east-west avenues while running parallel to the freeway. In general, the road is composed of two lanes in each direction, a central turning lane, and on-street parking on either side. In total, the street accommodates seven cars across, and is approximately 100 feet wide. Interestingly, the width of the street does not seem to pose a challenge to its use, even though proportion of width to building height skews heavily in favor of the street. There is also much automotive traffic to the westwood commercial strip from other areas, although not much within (business to business) the strip.

local typology: billboards

"Every day, commuters and residents who use Westwood Boulevard are bombarded with commercial messages from 64 billboards that line the street, not including the billboards found on bus stops and the banners that hang from the street lights."

-Jim Bursch, *West LA Online*

Billboards are a quintessential part of the Los Angeles landscape. This is understandable in such a large, auto-based metropolis where signage must be able to quickly catch the eye in a matter of seconds. Freestanding billboards in Los Angeles also tend to be of a different character than in most other American cities; In L.A., the billboard has transcended its role solely as a conveyor of information, and has been given the additional role of conveying an aesthetic ideal. The Los Angeleno billboard is more likely than most to be a carefully composed graphic object, often advertising for a high-end product that focuses less on the actual merchandise being sold than the "idea" that the merchandise conveys.

The birth of this new role for the billboard, coincidentally, comes from within the persian community, from the Iran-born fashion designer Bijan Pakhivad, based in Beverly Hills. According to his graphic designer Cynthia Miller, "before our first billboard, billboards in L.A. were generally used for more typical, everyday objects, such as tobacco and beverages. Bijan was really the catalyst that started the trend towards the use of the billboard for the fashion industry". With this shift in thinking about the potential of the billboard, it was able to be catapulted from merchandising tool to design object.



boardscape: looking north up westwood boulevard from wilkins.

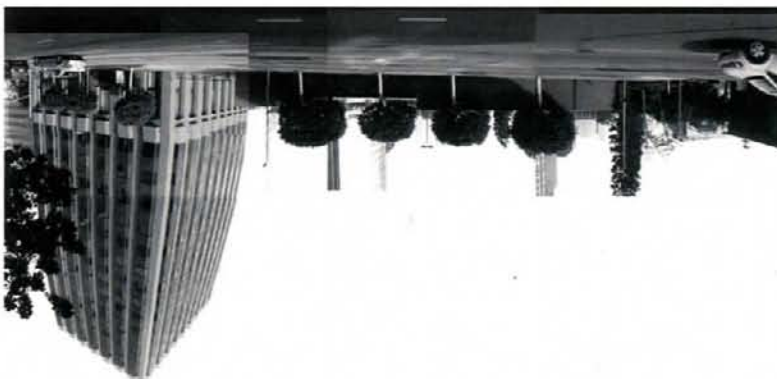


santa monica boulevard: iranian demonstration in the foreground, bijan billboard in the background.



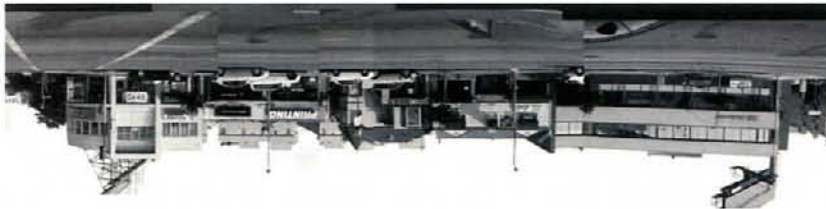
shah reza pahlavi wishes you a happy norooz: this billboard offers holiday wishes while underscoring the fact that there is much local support for the (former) ruling family of iran.

wilshire boulevard



ashton ave

The following pages are a series of photomontages which present the Westwood strip from Wilshire to Santa Monica.



wellworth ave

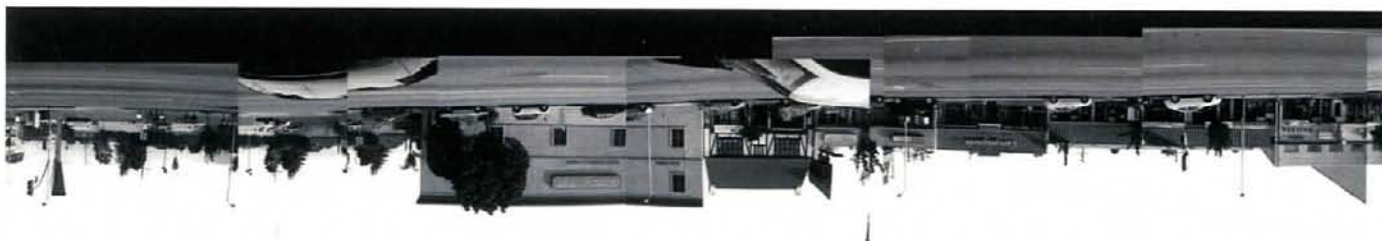
rochester ave



wilkins ave

ohio ave

holman ave





massachussetts ave.



santa monica boulevard

tehrangeles

While the diaspora following the Islamic Revolution was the primary time of immigration for the majority of the base of the local Iranian community, it was certainly not the first time that Persians sought out California as a new home outside of Iran. Lured by the climate as well as the education offered by the University of California system, Persians began immigrating to the United States in noticable numbers as early as the 1950's. As Daryoush Mahboubi, a Beverly Hills-based developer remarked "I came to the United States in 1966 to study architecture at UC Berkeley. Growing up in Iran, one of my good friends from childhood was American, who later moved back to the states, and when I was looking to go to college abroad, and learned that he was going to Berkeley, I figured I would too, as at least I wold know someone there" After one semester, Mahboubi would change his major to business, and start investing in land in the Los Angeles area with the financial assistance of his family back in Iran. At the time he emigrated, there were not many Iranians in California, and thus adjusted rather quickly to American life "you see, those of us who came over prior to the revolution tend to be more assimilated into mainstream America, as there was no safety net of a community, and we were rather quickly americanized".

But if not for these earlier immigrants, there very well might not have been "Little Persia". The first Persian business on the Westwood strip was the Attari Sandwich Shop at 1388 Westwood Boulevard, dating from the early 1970's. Opened by Ms. Attari, who had been in Los Angeles for some time, the shop eminently proved to be one of the catalysts of the strip's development by establishing a Persian presence in the area. Subsequent development followed; bookstores, restaurants, food markets, travel agencies, music stores, beauty salons and passport photo/green card offices catering to the Persian community chose to make Westwood Boulevard their home.

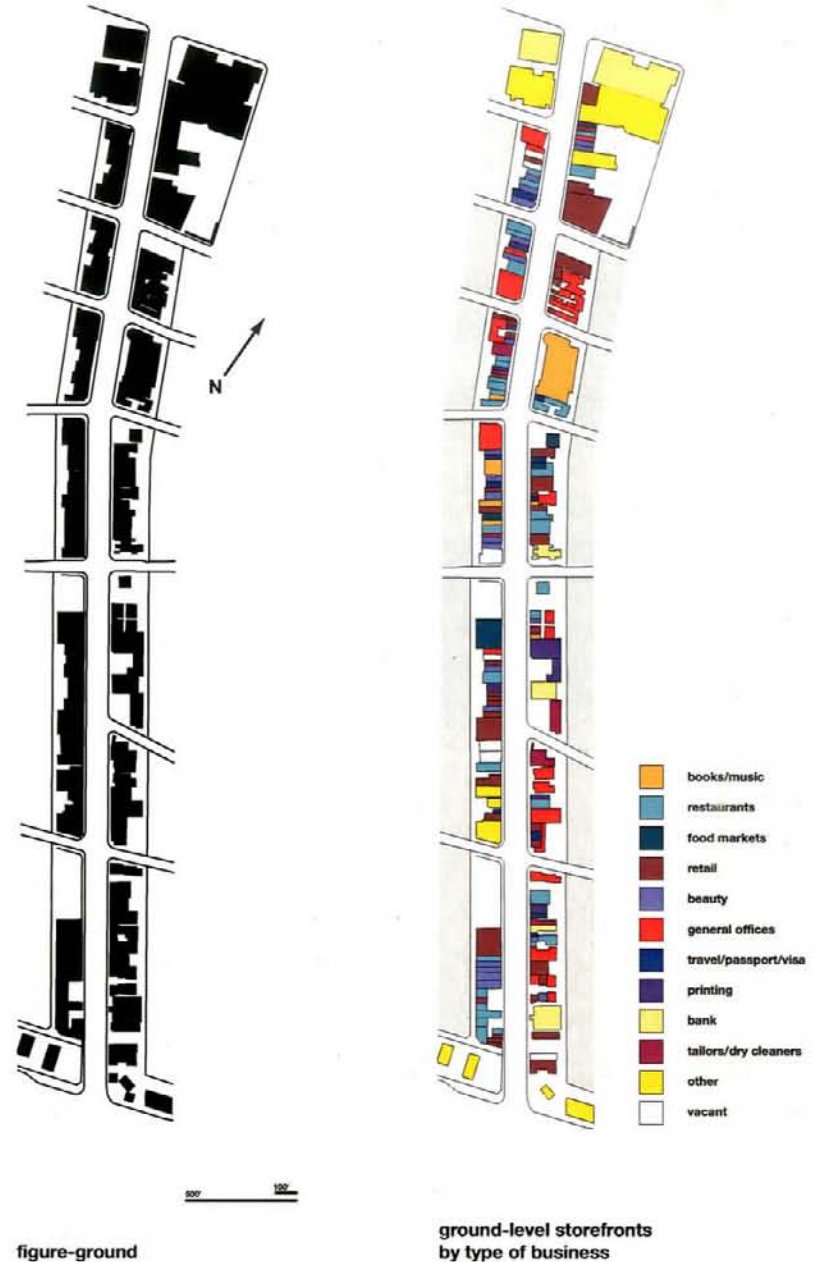
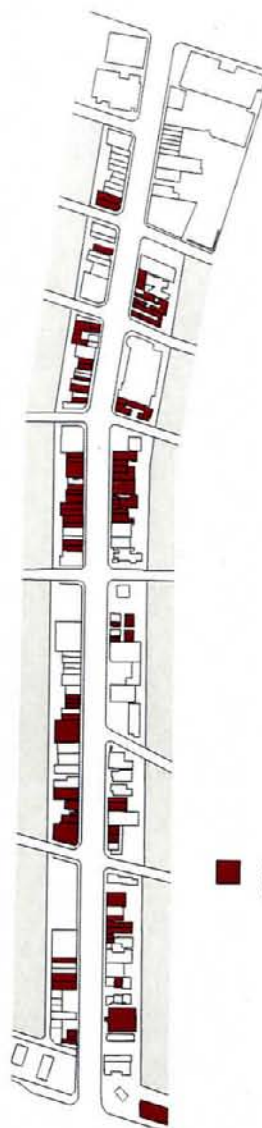


figure-ground

ground-level storefronts
by type of business

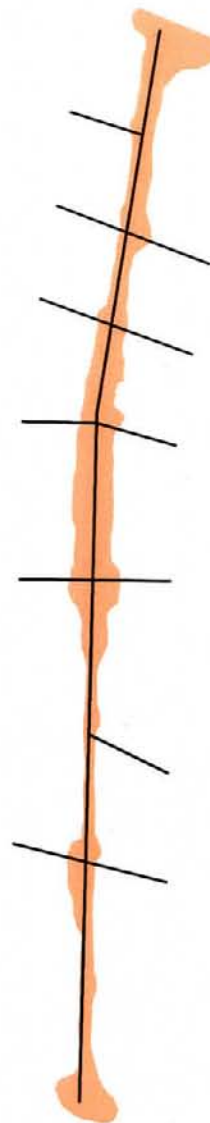
The strip provides, to a certain extent, "one stop shopping" for all things Persian. For many, it is a destination, as while the immediate residential areas have many Persian residents, they are only one part of the diverse mix that inhabits the Westwood neighborhood. Conversely, the overall Persian population is widely dispersed throughout the area, and many drive to Westwood Boulevard from further afield. By no means are these the only Persian grocery stores, bookstores, beauty shops, passport offices, restaurants, etc... in greater Los Angeles; this happens to be the only large concentration in a setting conducive to walking, and it just happens to be the oldest. As one of the grocery store managers mentioned to me, things have changed in the past 30 years. The area has gradually become more Persian, and with that, there have been changes, both physical as well as cultural, that have occurred since she had first arrived. An interesting change is the attitude towards jaywalking: "twenty, thirty years ago, no-one jaywalked, people were hesitant, crossed at the intersections. Today, everyone jaywalks, just darts across the street". This is interesting as in Iran, jaywalking is rather common. With increased familiarity to new surroundings comes the ability to take agency over one's environment.

This goes beyond just jaywalking; in the diagrams at right; it is interesting to note the overlap between concentration of persian businesses, jaywalking, and overall street activity, especially in the centermost block, between Wilkins and Ohio avenues. This is considered to be "ground zero" of Little Persia; is the most active part of the strip, and is the portion closed for the annual norooz (Persian new year) celebration (p.22-23).

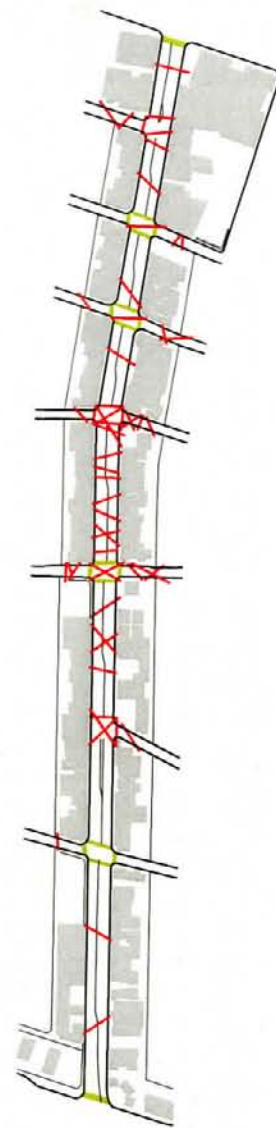


concentration of
persian businesses

ground-floor
persian businesses
(signage in farsi)



levels of pedestrian
street activity



pedestrian paths
across streets
(green=suggested,
red= user defined)



norooz celebration *mar. 22 2004*



westwood boulevard is occasionally closed for special events throughout the year; pictured here is the annual norooz celebration (persian new year) which attracts thousands of revelers to westwood boulevard.

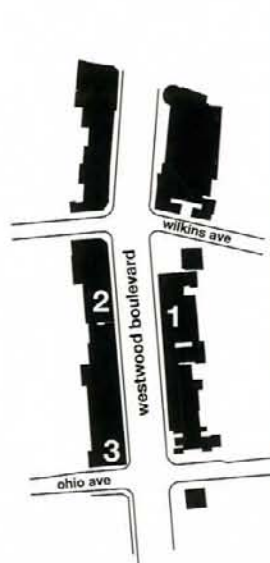
1. damoka persian rug center
1424 westwood boulevard



2. ketab bookstore
1419 westwood boulevard



3. vacant
1499 westwood boulevard



the significance of text

According to one shopkeeper, there were 150 Persian-owned businesses on Westwood in the early 1990's, today there are 280. Nearly everyone that I had talked to mentioned that Westwood boulevard was certainly *the* "Persian area" of Los Angeles, and destined to become even more so. This can be attributed primarily to cultural ideas of ownership, and the significance of the sign.

"In Persian, as well as other ethnic cultures from that part of the world, the sign is the symbol of ownership. A father will own a building, and place his own sign out front, then his son becomes a dentist, and puts his sign on the building, the daughter opens a business and puts her sign on the building. In that regard, it is claimed, and is a symbol. That explains all of the signs on the buildings on Westwood, many of which are illegal, or against code, but the city does not enforce it."

- Daryoush Mahboubi

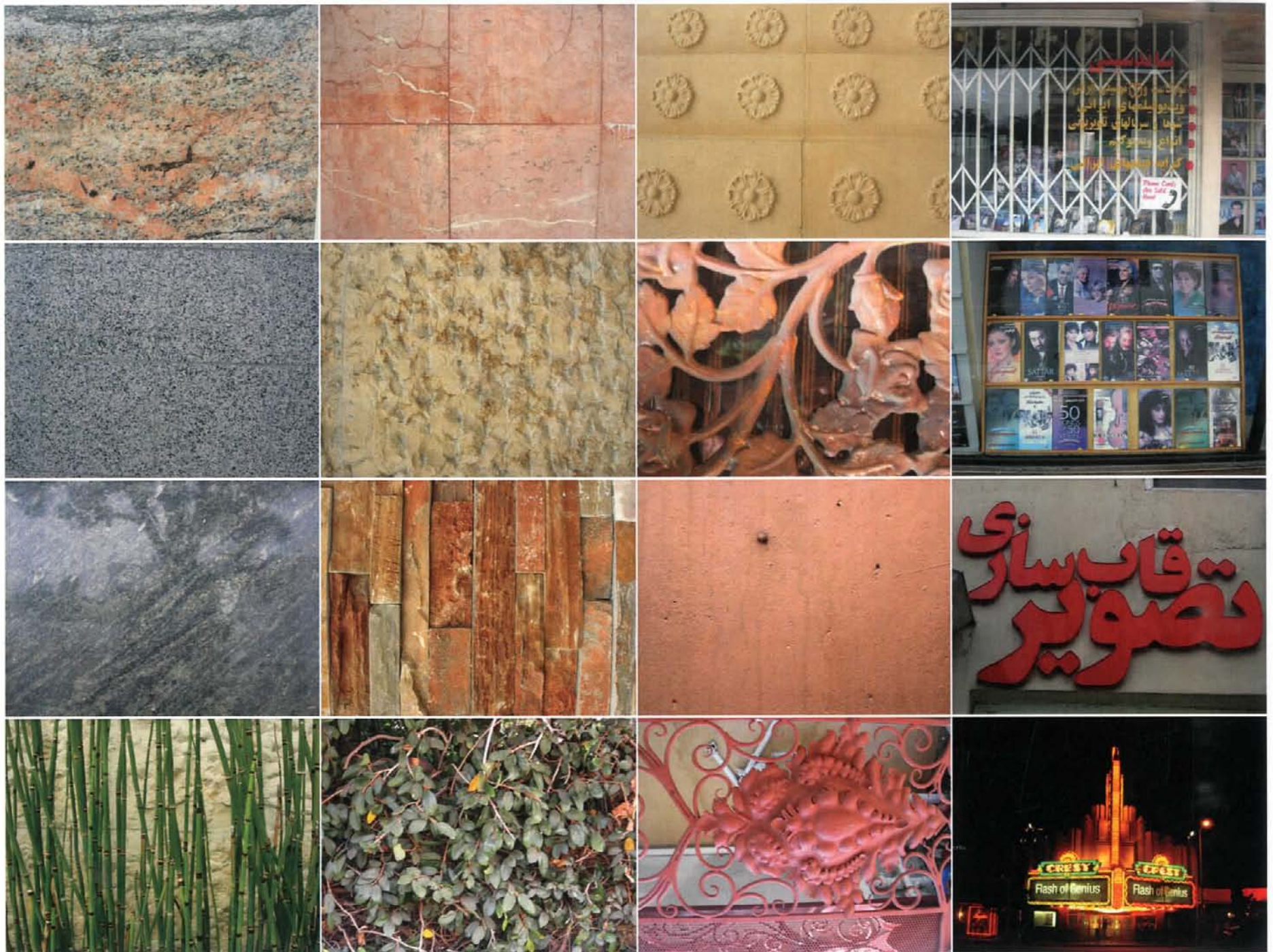
Indeed, the surfaces of the buildings on Westwood Boulevard seem coated in signs, a condition unusual in a relatively linear city such as Los Angeles. The sign becomes symbol, and the content of the signs, more often than not, is text in the Farsi script, which acts as texture, working in concert with, while at the same time opposing, the English text that proliferates alongside it.

Even when one no longer occupies a building, the text may linger, in the case of three buildings on the block of Westwood between Wilkins and Ohio avenues. All three of the buildings have the name "Damoka" inscribed upon them. one building serves as the Damoka Persian Rug Center, while another is a bookstore, and the third is vacant. Ownership of these three buildings is therefore very literally manifested through the use of text and signage.



"...it was found that although the proportion of an ethnic group living in particular areas was significant in judging its ethnic character, even more important was the location of that groups businesses and social and religious institutions...their presence along particular stretches of roads led to the identification of the surrounding neighborhood as belonging to Bohemians, Italians or Jews- even if they constituted a minority of that area: **The visibility of the cues along the arterial routes was significant**"

- Amos Rapoport in *The Meaning of the Built Environment*



"we persians tend to like stone; it has a sense of permanence"- local business owner

the various textures of westwood boulevard

texture and materiality

The facades and interiors of the buildings on Westwood Boulevard have been the most impacted by the strip's transformation into Little Persia. While there have been a few significant buildings built by the Persian community, such as the Damoka Rug Shop, Attari Plaza, and the Southern California Jewish Center, the majority of transformation has been much more subtle, taking on the form of spatial arrangements and facade treatments. One of the more common alterations made to buildings on the Westwood strip is the addition of stone as a surface treatment. The majority of the buildings on Westwood are of the type that has either brick or stucco fascia; simple, one or two story commercial buildings. An alteration that occurs in the case of a number of the Persian businesses is the addition of stone to the facade in one of two ways.

Stone tile is a common alteration, typically granite, as it is easy to apply over existing brick and stucco, and as had been remarked to me in my discussions with locals, imparts a sense of permanence. Stone tile is also significantly less expensive than stone construction, and allows a "quick, applied permanence" to be added to a building. It is also the "default" building material of Iran. Its ability to be applied as a surface treatment is also evident in another trend, which is applying stone as abstracted, "classical" ornament, to establish symmetry in door surrounds, and to apply hierarchy to certain openings, and therefore, their internalized programs.

Stone is not the only texture that contributes to the overall richness of Westwood Boulevard. Ironwork, both decorative and for security purposes, is prevalent throughout the strip, and tends to work as a screening device, often in concert with other textures, such as text and images. Images populate the windows of the music stores, creating a field that is a mosaic of graphics. Vegetation is used sparingly; it can be found in internalized courtyards, and occasionally directly abutting the sides of buildings; overall, vegetation is highly controlled. The boldest textural device however, is light. Seen in the Crest theater, dating from the early 1930's, neon is used extensively in the strip; often stores will have a sign in neon in addition to many in print or window decal. The neon gives the street a mellow glow throughout the evening, encouraging its occupation.

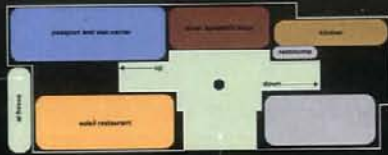
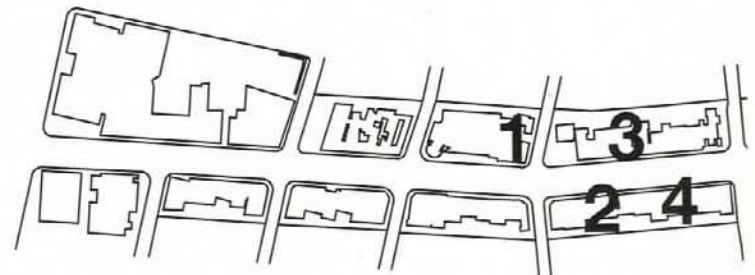


applied stone in post-modernist, faux-classical abstraction, creates new centrality (versus overall whole) and reinforces the restaurant, with its entrance under the arch, as the primary function.

spatial approaches: six shops

The six business establishments presented here look at the way that new construction (Attari Plaza, Damokarugs) as well as existing construction (Ketab Books, Jordan Market, Kolbe Ketab, Caffe Zinio) have set up and established themselves along Westwood Boulevard. While there is a divergence of programs in the six, all do follow some common planning principles. Most significantly, and present in all but Caffe Zinio, is the use of a three-part planning strategy, one with a (somewhat) centralized symmetry.

In the case of the Attari Plaza, a mixed use complex, the is is most evident when considering the building from its side elevation on Wilkins Ave. There are three zones; central, front, and back. The central zone contains the heart of the courtyard, a vibrant space throughout the day and afternoon, as a space for socializing with coffee and friends. It is one of the most active outdoor spaces on the Westwood strip. At the rear of the courtyard is the namesake "Attari Sandwich Shop", the first Persian business on Westwood Boulevard. The remainder of the building contains a French restaurant, passport photo and green card center, as well as a number of offices on the upper level. The crux of the program however, is the centralized coffeeshop/courtyard, which strategically and visually occupies the "prime" part of the plan. In the Ketab bookstore, the central portion of the plan is occupied by the cashier, a small seating area with trinkets from Iran, cards, artwork, and the brunt of the book collection.



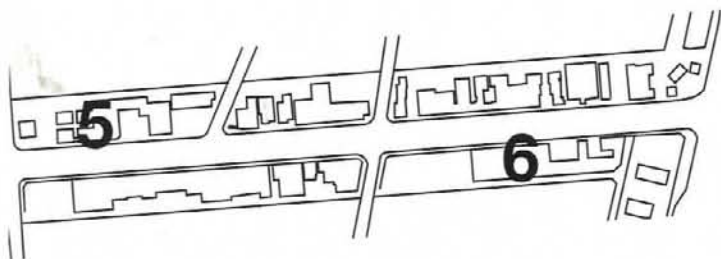
1. attari plaza



2. ketab books

In Damoka rugs, the plan is more open, but the three part planning system is manifested quite explicitly through the facade; the bays are not of even size, but the smaller central bay retains its prominence due to the location of the door and the proliferation of detailing. Indeed, this door has a counterpoint on the rear facade, and this creates an axis through which, while not explicitly delineated through spatial dividers or materiality, manifests itself through the placement of product- rugs are kept clear of this central axis, which is used solely as circulation path, and thus divides the space into three parts. it is interesting to note that in terms of the stores presented here, only Damoka Rugs and Caffè Zinio do not have their product as their main, centralized focus.

The Jordan Market and Kolbe Ketab bookstore are the most explicit in terms of the three part internal product organization. In the Jordan Market, it is done through variations in scale and position vis-a-vis the entrance. The entryway is centralized, which positions one right in front of a low table, containing produce, and ringed on the back by containers with imported nuts. To the left is the cashier and the meat case, to the right is refrigerated foods. These act as more peripheral objects, while the focus is on the produce, nuts and dry goods, as they all are rather significant in Persian cuisine. Rarely in grocery stores are the center aisles higher than the peripheral, but here, combined with the high ceiling and the enfilade of orchids above the meat case, the tall central rack asserts a central prominence while providing spatial definition. The reverse occurs in Kolbe Ketab.



3. damoka rug store



4. jordan market



Like the Ketab Bookstore and the Jordan Market, Kolbe Ketab has a distinct three part plan, with a certain hierarchy of significance in terms of merchandise, but unlike the Jordan market, the edges are rather tall, and the central table is quite low. The centrality here is established through the change of scale between the low table and the china cabinet to the rear, as well as the plywood arches, that reinforce the hierarchy of the three rows of merchandise.

Caffe Zinio is where these norms are broken. There is a central aisle for a portion of the store, but it does not tie into the entryway, and overall, the plan is more fragmented than the other five businesses. The significance here lies in the owners and the users. The first five businesses profiled are all Westwood Boulevard "institutions" which have been around for quite some time, and are generally run and patronized by a somewhat older clientele. The Caffe Zinio, on the other hand, is a space (and attractor) for the younger generation. On repeated visits, the clientele was apparently all under thirty.

6. kolbe ketab bookstore



7. caffe zinio

the "persian palace"

The primary way that the local Persian community has expressed itself architecturally is through private homes throughout the area, but most notably in Beverly Hills, where Persian students make up an estimated 40% of the population in the public schools. Through the process of building and remodeling, attributes of traditional Persian arts and architecture have been loosely represented into the home. As Greg Goldin, L.A. Times architecture critic writes "As preposterous as this might sound, a Persian Palace is intended to be a palace in the way that the originals once were.. Persian architecture, like carpet weaving and the poetry of Rumi, was an effort to partake of the sublime. Sumptuousness and inutility were the qualities that found expression in elaborate mosaics, mirrored walls, finely filigreed ironwork. The imagery was abstract, the line sinuous, unending, often confusing foreground with background --and intended to evoke the infinite dimension of God".

Another characteristic of these homes is their approach towards the use of land and frontality. Nearly the entire lot is generally occupied, and the houses tend to practice an extreme facadism, with a complex, deep surface that is punctured through large windows that give these planes a condition of phenomenal transparency. The sides of these houses, however, are flat and unadorned by the standards of the front, and have openings only where the plan necessitates. Frontality and the complex surface serves as organizer and conveyance.



examples of "persian palaces" in
beverly hills



*kolbe ketab bookstore
1518 westwood*



*tochal market and shaherazad restaurant
1418 westwood*

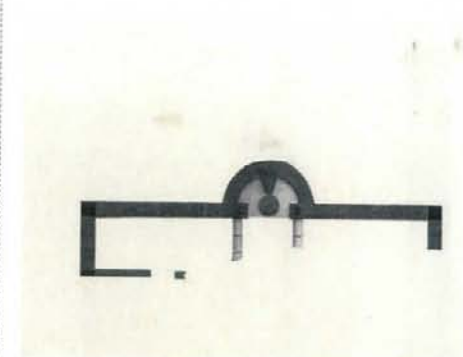
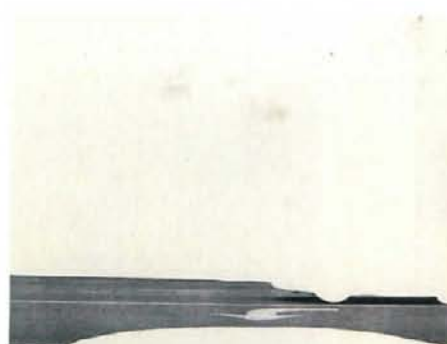
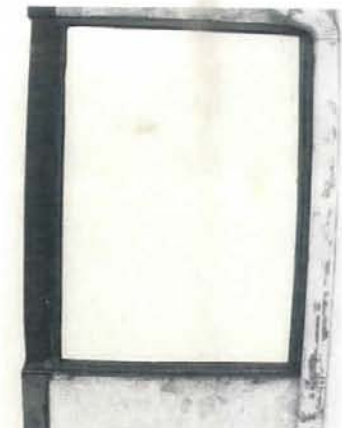


*front window of Speed EX
1433 westwood*

analyzing the image:westwood

Looking at Westwood through the lens of a camera allows one to frame a condition, and with the detachment that comes with time, objectively consider it as a formal, projected plane rather than a three dimensional space. These three images all represent a different condition prevalent within the strip: the internalized, deep, textured space; the discussion between localized centrality and the overall whole; the framed compact space with textual frontality.

In all, the projective and compositional qualities reflect a heritage of culturally embedded spatial preference.



isolation of color/texture to
flatten image

foreground

centralized object/field

frame of centralized focus

شب های قهر



شعر و موسیقی

ستارگان نامی ایران و هنر ایران زده

لحظات خاطره انگیز دیگر را با شکوه عظمت هنر

دگی

شب خاطره

نروه جنجالی

فان

با حضور بسیار

emories

پذیرایی:

زمان:

مکان:

بلیط:

ولی: Q مارکت

ولی: انسینو گلت

ولی: وودلند هیلز

پیکو: ایلات مارکت

وست وود: موزیک باک

۷۵۸-۹۹ (۸۱۸)

۳۴۳-۷ (۸۱۸)

تلفن اطلاعات: ۱۹۲۶-۹۲۷ (۱۰)

ایزه ۲۰ عدد بلیط ورودی برای برنامه بعدی جشن

theory

the paintings

*“As for the Persian miniature, **it is based on the heterogenous division of the two dimensional space involved**, for only in this way can each horizon of the two-dimensional surface come to symbolize a state of being as well as a degree of consciousness. The law of perspective followed in the Persian miniature, before influences of Renaissance art along with internal factors brought about its decay, is one based on natural perspective, the *perspectiva naturalis*, whose geometric laws were developed by Euclid and later by Muslim geometers and opticians...The miniature remained faithful to the law of this science, **and in conformity of the “realism” of the Islamic view did not betray the two-dimensions of the surface by making it appear as three-dimensional**, as was to happen through the application of rules of “artificial perspective” (the *perspectiva artificialis*) during the European Renaissance. **By conforming strictly to the heterogenous and qualitative conception of space, the Persian miniature succeeded in transforming the plane surface of the miniature to a canvas depicting grades of reality.**”*

*- S.H. Nasr in *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture**

the paintings: objectives and methodology

objectives:

- the significance of surface as narrative: hierarchies.
- to understand the paintings as a layered space, projected in a flattened, folded, top-down condition that represents a scene in deep space, and objectively deducing the formal moves that create this condition.
- to understand the role that distortion plays in the composition, and in the flattening process.
- what the individual elements of the scene show when abstracted, and what that abstraction tells about the overall whole.
- to consider the condition of frame as the frontmost piece, in concert with text; how written narrative acts as a texture and part of the compositional whole.

methodology:

- diagram: abstracting objects into outlines and fields into planes; highlighting and inverting logics.
- modeling: as the paintings are constructed by hand, deconstruction in the same method allows for greater understanding and reductivity.



"bahram chubin listening to the prophecy of a sorceress" from a shahnameh of firdawsi

shiraz, 1585



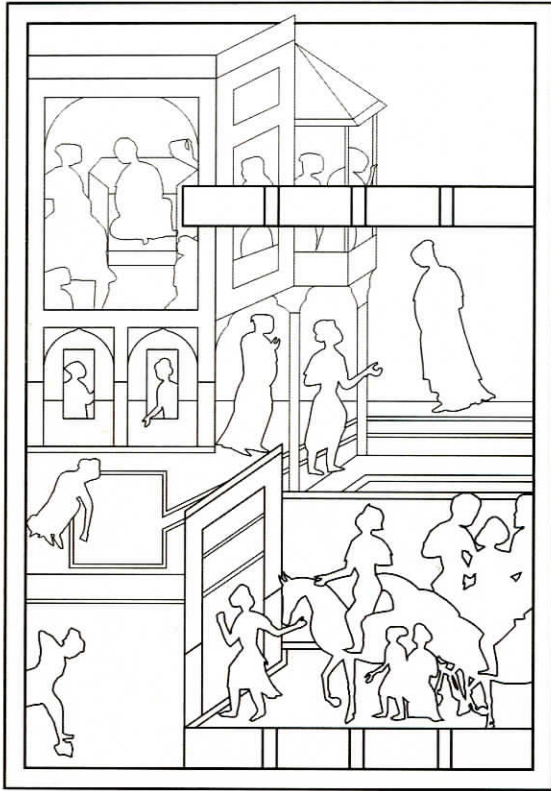
"zulaikha listens to yusuf explaining religious points" from a haft awrang of jami

shiraz, 1575

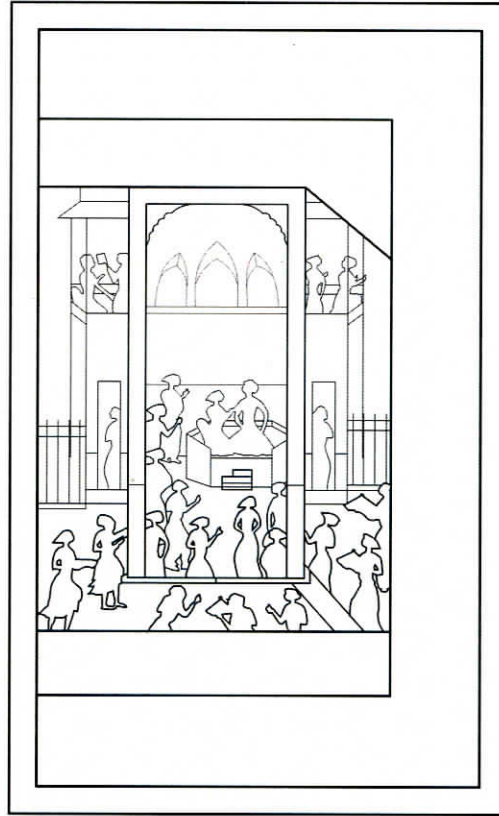


"siyavush recieves gifts from afrasiyab's peace envoy" from shah tahmasp's shahnameh.

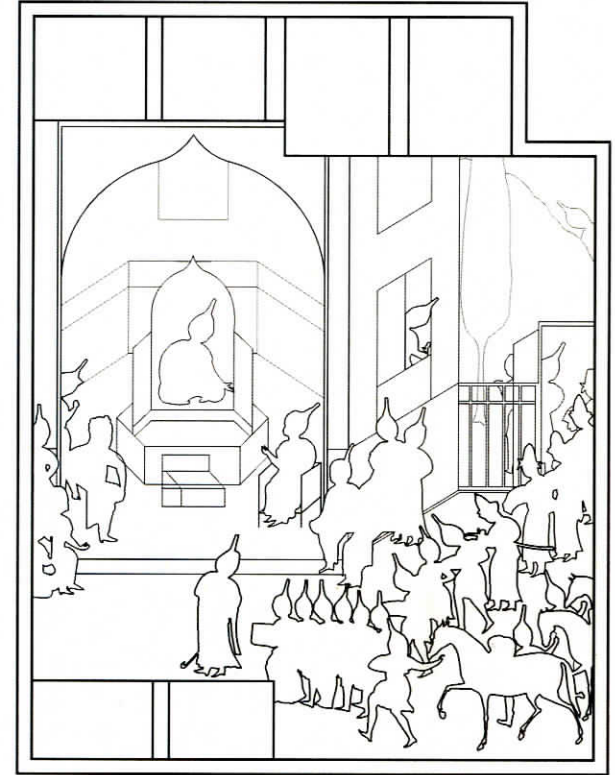
1530



1

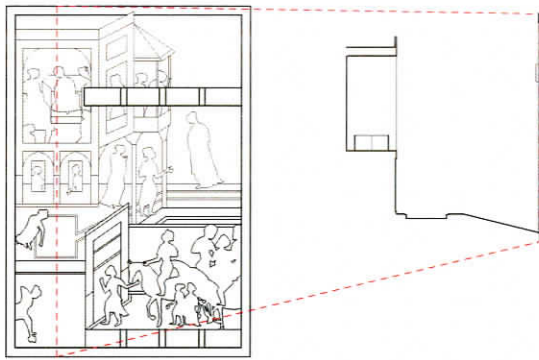


2

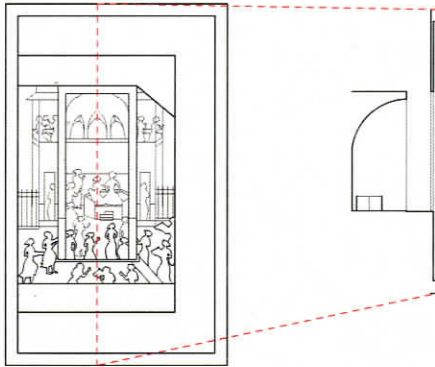


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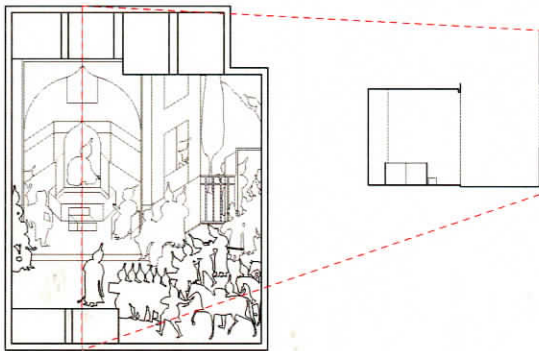
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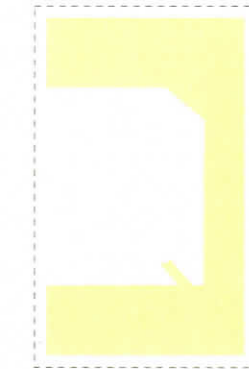
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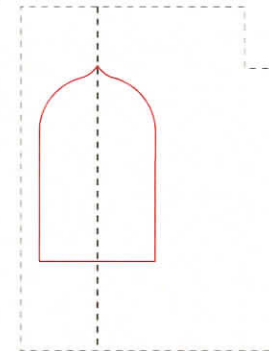
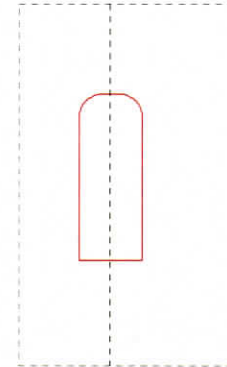
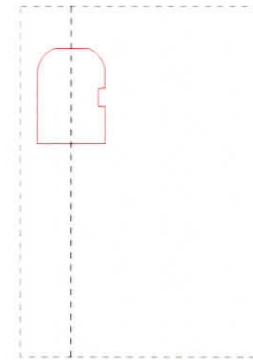
3



section through (off- center) centralizing gesture frame is compressed to show the relationship to how it would work in true perspective



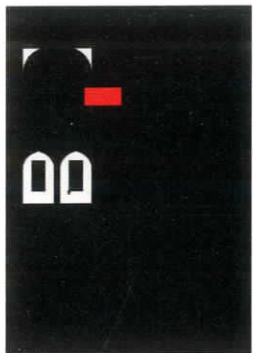
fields containing text;
pulled to the front of the
image



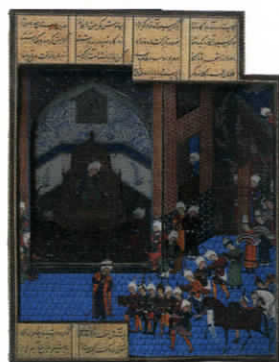
redistribution of centrality
through focal draw



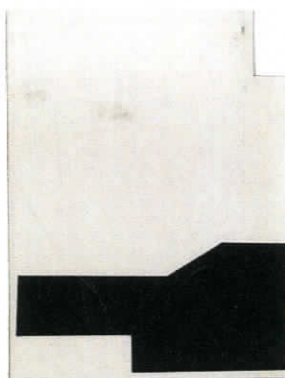
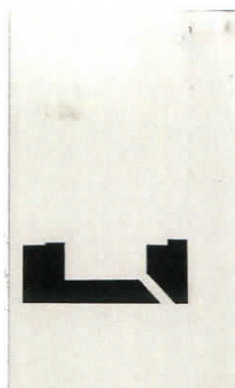
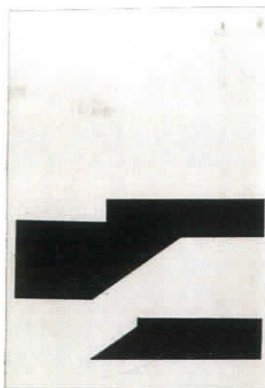
people and the negative
space of the pavilion



white= symmetry of the
(re)centralizing object
red= the text that
breaks it



relief models: frontality
and depth using shadow



forecourt



perspectival distortion:
blue elements recede to
back and are subtracted
from b+w image



color is used to define the
"built form"



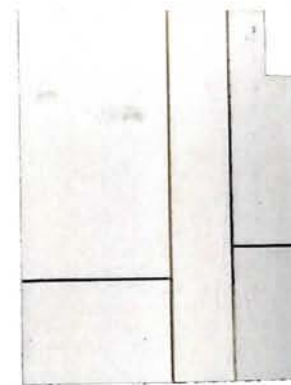
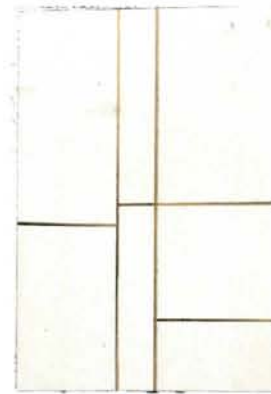
isolation of "linear"
textures- fills in primary
constructed elements



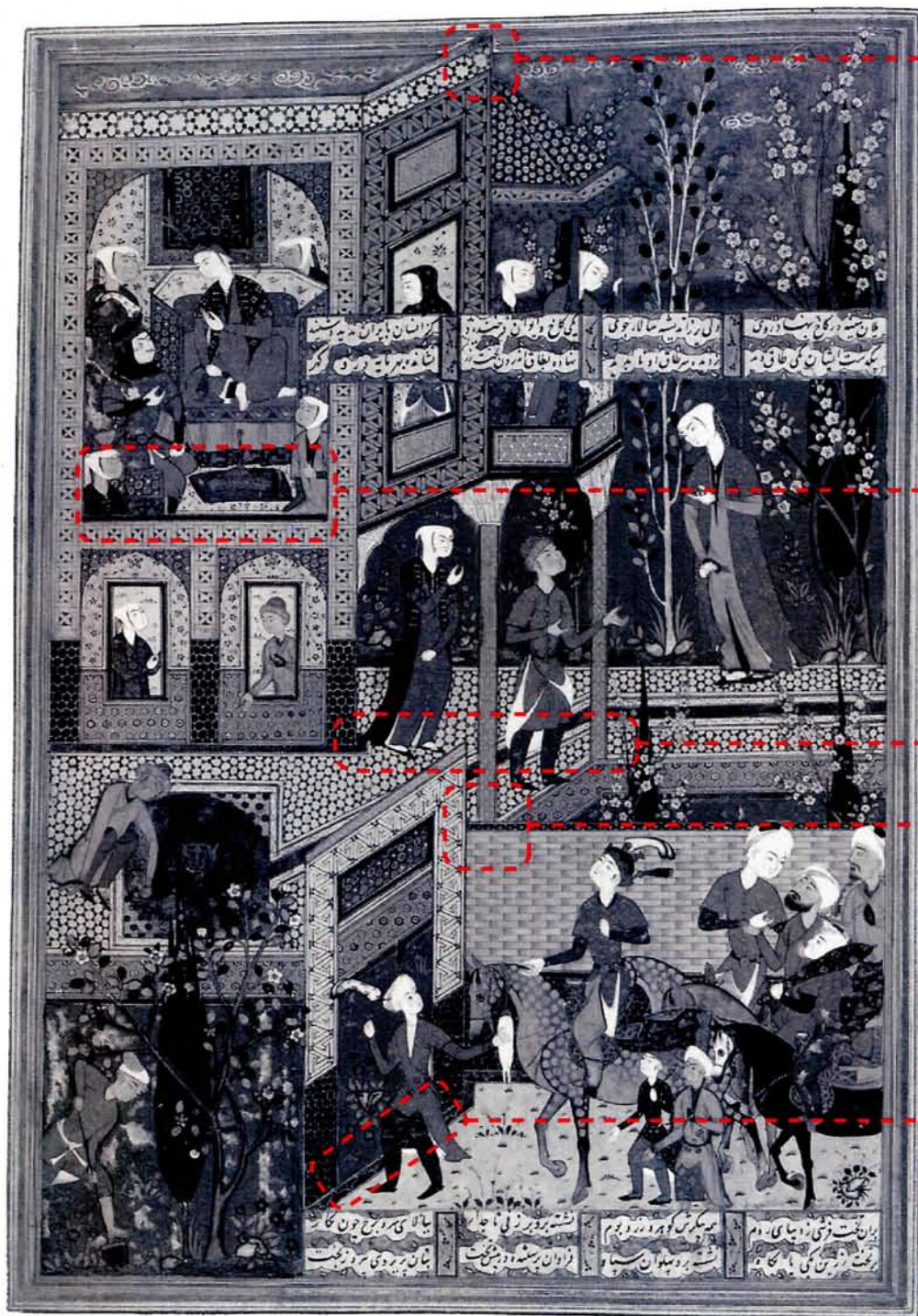
isolation of "circular"
textures- fills in secondary
constructed elements



isolation of areas of script,
within "frame" with relation
to image



lines that regulate the
"folding" (45 degree crank)



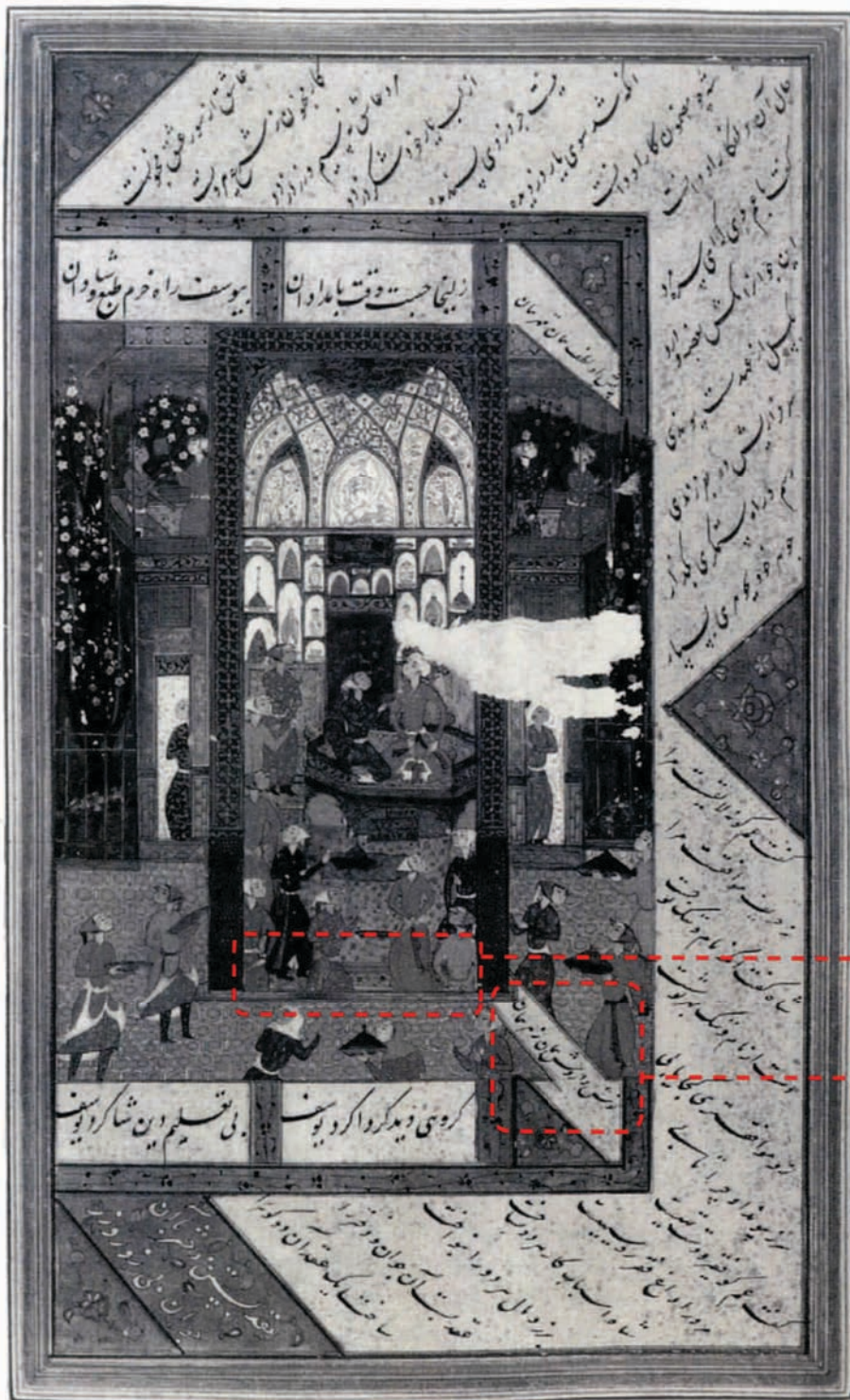
here the top of the building, as it seemingly moves backward on an angle, breaks the border which, along with the text, is the most frontalized element.

the woman at left is impossibly cut off at the chest, and the woman at right the same way at the knees based on what is occurring below.

the question here is the base of the column and its relation to the wall of the "focus" at left. they are represented as being in line with one another, but as the balcony being supported rests behind the arched focus, conflict exists.

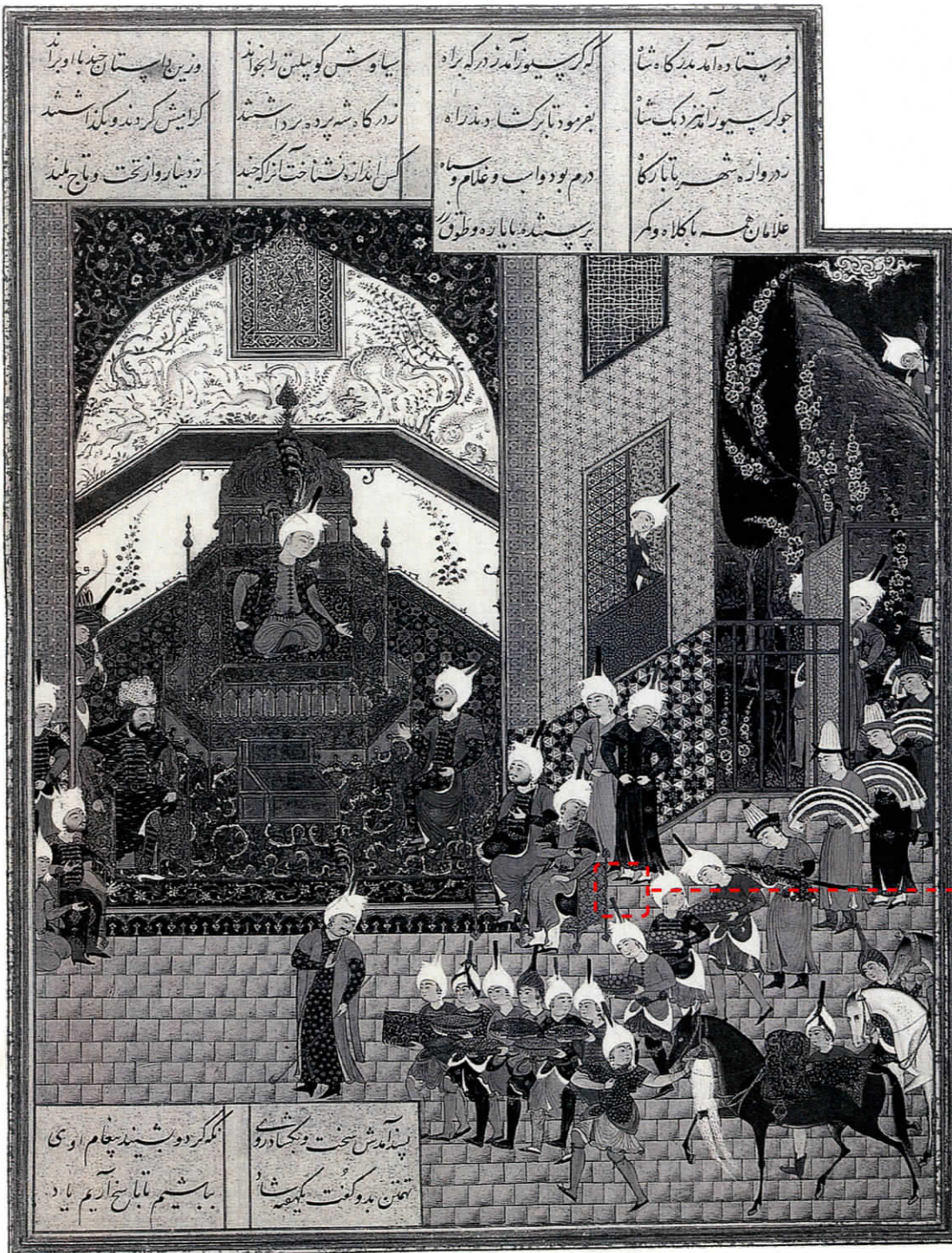
the trajectory of this column is the most striking discrepancy of all in the three paintings; the column appears to land extremely far in front of what is actually possible.

what appears to occur here is a rather severe drop of 2+ feet; that is a point of confusion as there is a procession heading through it.



there is an implied drop as one of the people is at waist level, while others are mid-calf; a subtle but explicit lack of continuity between the surface of the garden and that of the internal space.

in all of these paintings, the script is considered the closest element to the viewer, yet here the text slips behind the trim around the base of the building.



here, the foot of one man is overlapping/in front of the top of another man's hat who happens to be placed much farther to the front in the vertical hierarchy.

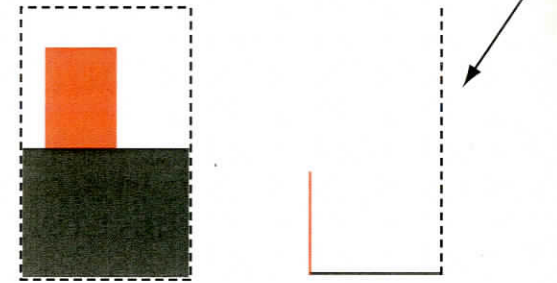
the ramifications:the "devices"

There are a number of devices at work here that are employed to compress the deep space of the Persian garden and pavilion represented in the painting. The devices are expressed in different ways: **viewpoint**, the **"rhetorical fold"**, **frame+text**, **slippage**, **surface differentiation**, the **forecourt**, and **relative scale**. Each of these devices works in concert with the others to project the depth into the plane.

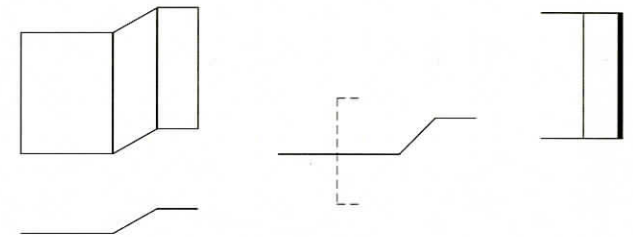
The sections through the paintings reveal that the flattening of the image is indeed a form of stretching. The set of sections on page 40 show how the frame would have to be shortened substantially in order for the image to be understood through the concept of "artificial perspective" (the form that developed during the renaissance); the height of the flattened painting is much taller than what is actually occurring in the scene. In the diagram at right, the top of the red rectangle is rather close to the top of the frame, the dashed line, when viewed as a flat composition. When thought of as the three dimensional space that it represents, the gray rectangle, representative of the forecourt, rests horizontal, and the red rectangle remains vertical. This is representative of the perceptual distortion of these paintings, derived from the fact that they are being represented from the **viewpoint** of a severe above angle, as shown at right.

The **rhetorical fold** is evidenced in paintings 1+3; it is the device that represents a 45 degree angle in plan, characteristic of Persian architecture of the era, through what appears to be a rise in level when viewed casually from the front. This device generally serves two primary functions; distortion and the (subtle) explanation of architectural intent.

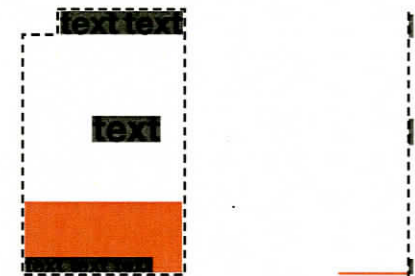
One of the defining characteristics of these paintings is the presence of calligraphy. The presence of this text is heightened by its role as one of the most assertive flattening devices; the frontmost element in these paintings along with the frame. **Frame +text** refers to the combined ordering framework that the two provide. While the text generally hangs off of, or is in some way attached to the frame, it can also, in some occasions, float on its own, or extend deep into the image, as in painting 2. The text is, in many ways, the superlative element of the overall composition. The primacy of the text over the frame is highlighted in painting 3, where the frame conforms to the text, rather than vice versa.



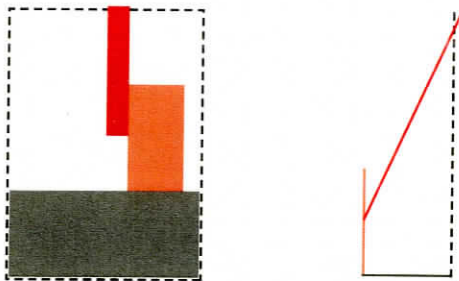
viewpoint: front, section



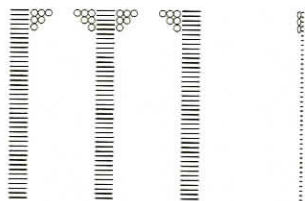
rhetorical fold: front, plan, section



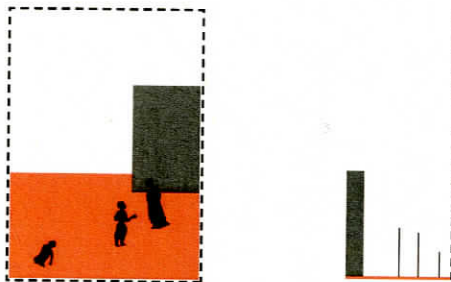
frame+text: front, section



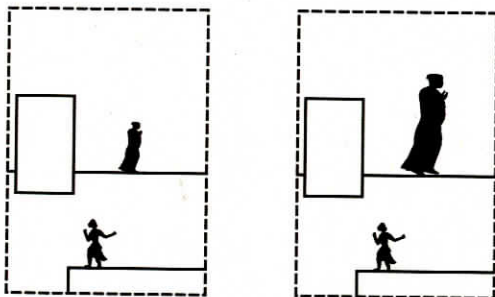
slippage: front, section



surface differentiation: front, section



forecourt: front, section



relative scale: projected, actual

Slippage refers to the ability for certain elements of objects to break out of the order of front to back, up and down that they are generally placed. These are the distortions and impossibilities that are characteristic of Persian painting as well as gardens, and work to reinforce the quality of the sublime that was the ultimate goal in the representation of the garden. Pages 43-45 show where this occurs in the three study paintings; this is a characteristic that is evident in nearly every Persian painting.

The patterns, highly varied and bright in color, can work to serve as both a hierarchical and flattening device through a system of **surface differentiation** that uses two or more types of pattern to assign roles to the elements. Painting 1 breaks this down into linear and circular patterns. The linear patterns are applied to the regulating, architectural, solid elements. The circular patterns apply to the more decorative, ancillary elements. By isolating the two individually (page 42), two different types of organization are presented; the structural and the thematic.

The **forecourt** is both a significant compositional element as well as a device for compression. The "plinth" where the action in the painting is staged and is generally the most complex aggregate of occupants, whose positions tend to both reinforce the planning strategy of the garden / pavilion. The forecourt is generally the largest horizontal element made vertical.

Relative scale is concerned with the fact that all of the individuals, horses, furniture, elements of the pavilion, etc... are at the same scale regardless of depth from the viewer. In this line of logic, one can extrapolate that if artificial perspective was factored in, the elements would have to get significantly larger as the groundplane moved from front to back in order to get this proportional relationship. This is something that does not occur in artificially perspectival art; it is unique to the flattened surface.

the flattened condition in architecture

and the dialectic of eastern and western space

The influence that cubist painting has exerted upon modern architecture has been rather significant. Through the use of certain “devices” employed by early 20th century artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Ferdinand Leger which were transposed into architecture by the likes of Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius as expounded on by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky in their seminal article *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal*, a new sort of architecture took hold; one which was rather rooted in formalist tendencies, but ultimately produced rather innovative performative conditions. These early cubist paintings, as a product of early twentieth-century Europe, inherently reflect western modes of considering abstracted space.

Conversely, what if one is to consider a similar sort of transposition between painting and architecture, but one which is rooted in eastern modes of spatial abstraction? Fifteenth century Persian miniaturist painting, specifically the shahnameh's of the Savafid dynasty also reflect ways of thinking about and presenting space, albeit in a manner much more figurative and literally “architectural” than their twentieth-century cubist counterparts. What sort of formal and performative conditions might be the product of this?

To begin, it appears that one of the main contradictions between the two is the treatment of transparency; defined by Gyorgy Kepes in *Language of Vision* as “if one sees two or more figures overlapping each other, and each of then claims for itself the common overlapped part, then one is confronted with a contradiction of spatial dimensions. To resolve this contradiction one must assume the presence of a new optical quality. The figures are endowed with transparency; that is they are able to interpenetrate without an optical destruction of each other. Transparency implies more than an optical characteristic, it implies a broader spatial order. Space not only recedes but fluctuates in a continuous activity” The interesting point to note is that both cubist as well as Persian miniaturist painting manage to achieve this, despite their inherent differences stylistically; while cubist overlap tends to be purely formal, the overlap of abstracted geometries, in the miniaturist paintings, the overlap occurs in the placement of the bars of text; the written narrative superimposed over the visual narrative. In the painting at right,



1.1
“bahram chubin listening to the prophecy of
a sorceress” from a shahnameh of firdawsi

shiraz, 1585

while the upper line of text is obscuring what occurs behind it (in terms of opacity and literal transparency) it becomes incredibly clear what is going on behind it, based on the way that it is employed with relation to highly figural elements such as people, as well as the continuity of textured pattern. In these works, the text functions as an element which is consistently the most foregrounded condition, contradicting the more typical pre-cubist arrangement of foreground, middle ground and background that nonetheless occurs in these paintings, along with a contradiction of these separate frames. The text also works as a geometric device, setting up sub-areas of the paintings, and establishing the regulatory framework whilst also working to break otherwise symmetrical areas within the foreground/middleground/background arrangement. While cubist painting seeks to blur distinctions of "zoned areas" in its inherent structure, Persian miniaturism reinforces these zoned ideas in both explicit and subtle means; the areas as defined by the foregrounded text, and the textured frames and ground planes. In effect, these three devices provide the compositional spatial mechanisms. The overlap, or phenomenal transparency, occurs in zones of narrative rather than in abstracted visual fields.

Unlike the cubist paintings, the Persian miniaturist ones seek to represent "actual" space; or more accurately, idealized space. As S.H. Nasr writes in *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* "As for the Persian miniature, it is based on the heterogeneous division of the two dimensional space involved, for only this way can each horizon of the two-dimensional surface come to symbolize a state of being as well as a degree of consciousness...By conforming strictly to the heterogeneous and qualitative conception of space, the Persian miniature succeeded in transforming the plane surface of the miniature to a canvas depicting grades of reality." The important consideration here is that in this heterogeneous conception of space, where each zone is to represent a different state of being or degree of consciousness, there is an articulated "slippage" between the different zones. The slippage occurs in the way that the sub-narratives of the individual groups of people relate to the larger overall narrative; essentially this is all part of one, larger system that transcends any division based on states of being or degrees of consciousness. The physical elements of the paintings also slip in between the different zones in a very literal sense; columns do not land where they should in actuality (within the zone in which they start); rather they land into another frontalized condition of texture; and what they belong to becomes rather ambiguous. In fact, it is not thoroughly significant

what they belong to; the significance is that they belong to the whole. And it is significant that the whole represents a system of both activities and settings.

There is an implied urbanism in the Persian miniaturist paintings, with the systems of activities and settings that is absent in the cubist works, and the corresponding modernist architecture that is derived from them. The projects and paintings presented by Rowe and Slutzky are, while not as clearly figurative as the Persian miniatures, viewed as isolated objects; Both the Villa Stein a Garches and the Bauhaus are object buildings, meant to stand alone. Their use of phenomenal transparency and the cubist precedents is isolated rather than actively weaved into any sort of urban narrative. To look at this in the context of a cubist work, consider Picasso's *L'Arlesienne* (2.1), which Rowe and Slutzky contend provides the visual support for the transparency employed at the Bauhaus. Beyond the indication of transparency of materials, as implied with the overlapping of various planes to compose the subject of the painting, the woman, it is interesting to consider the way that the painting is composed: a figure in a background devoid of "context". Honorific portraiture, as well as still-lives, which compose the majority of figurative cubist painting; are western creations which contain a rather clear hierarchy of focus: it is on "the object". In Persian miniatures, the focus is on the whole, all the way out to the extents of the painted frame which surrounds the composition, and then within, a hierarchy of numerous additional foci present themselves to the viewer upon closer observation. Transposed into architecture, these paintings suggest a formal and programmatic strategy that interweaves different "heterogeneous worlds" at two different scales; the scale of the building, and the scale of the greater context. The constituent elements inside the building link to each other through the sort of slippages evident, while also relating in turn back to the greater context; something which can be implied both through the multiple ways of reading each image, but also by considering that each individual miniaturist painting is simply part of the greater whole of an illuminated manuscript, in which a cohesive story is told, through the text that is foregrounded in each of the individual paintings, and is therefore linked together by this common narrative; much like the way that a building, is part of the greater narrative of its urban context, and the architect can either choose to embrace that, or turn their back on it in the production of a standalone object. The miniaturist paintings suggest not only participating in the narrative of the urban context but carefully weaving



2.1

l'arlesienne

pablo picasso

paris, 1911-12

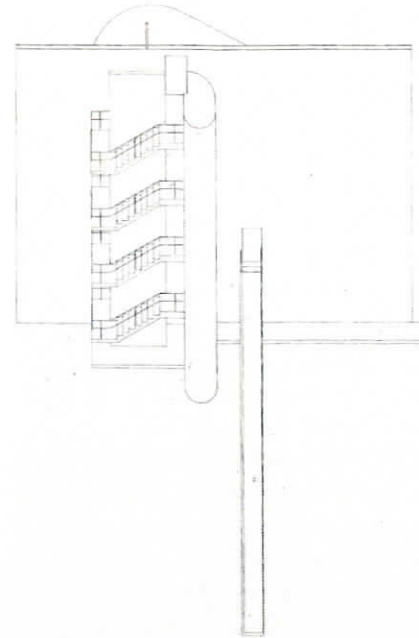
into it so as to create an indeterminacy of where one world (or program) ends, and another begins.

Part of the way that this indeterminacy is achieved is through the treatment of textures and materiality within these paintings. For example, in *bahram chubin listening to the prophecy of a sorceress* (1.1), the form and texture of the flowers in the upper left is transposed into the pattern of the quasi-pyramidal roof at center. This is something that occurs gradually, however. The flowers have a form and basic color scheme when they are located at the upper left corner, which is maintained at the center, where they become contiguous with the roof, however here a red border is added. This basic form and composite color scheme is then geometrized into the pattern on the roof. This is but one example of a common theme that occurs throughout these miniatures, of the materiality of one zone or object adapted and transposed into another; linking them at the very minute level of detail. While the scale is small, the impact is not. These sort of manipulations represent how each of the zones of these paintings are linked at all scales; from formal composition to materiality. To bring this forward into architectural practice suggests the acquisition and transformation of contextual material elements, creating a linkage in the narrative. This also works to once again muddy the traditional relationship of foreground/middleground/background that is at first glance occurring in these paintings, however not in the sort of way that one might expect it to.

Something which is not fully explored in Rowe and Slutzky's analysis of the relation of modern architecture to cubist painting is the idea of relative scale. Perhaps this is because of the fact that there is rarely a chance in cubist painting to read in any sort of real, tangible depth. In the Persian miniatures, however, the flatness of the works is the primary reading yet there is at the same time a tangible, potential depth to the works, based on our inherent understanding of the built world and the figurative nature of the paintings. The ideal of relative scale in these works really comes from the architectural lens, which immediately recognizes the people in the paintings as scale figures, thanks to the explicit figurality of the paintings. This occurs in each one of the Persian paintings: the people are all at the same scale. This in fact is one of the ultimate flattening devices employed as if presented in realistic fashion, one the people in the back would need to be twice as tall as those in the front to preserve any sense of reality. This brings to the discussion the idea that these paintings are presented as if a "soldier axon" as frequently

employed by John Hedjuk in the representation of his wall house series (3.1). However, this is immediately contradicted by the lack of thicknesses in these paintings, and adds to the flatness inherent in them. Contradiction is at the core of these paintings, and reinforces that it is impossible to view them through the western lens. **They create their own lens.**

As a result, to draw upon these paintings in the same way that modern architecture drew upon cubism and employ them as a way to influence built form creates a different kind of architecture, one with an “eastern” lens and sensibilities. The area of influence moves beyond the building itself and into the overall urban narrative; an architecture of weaving. One needs only to look at the bazaars of Iran (4.1) to understand that this tendency of weaving at numerous scales is deeply rooted in eastern sensibilities. What this may do for architecture is to understand the difference between eastern and western ways of seeing and presenting information in an idealized context and its spatial ramifications.



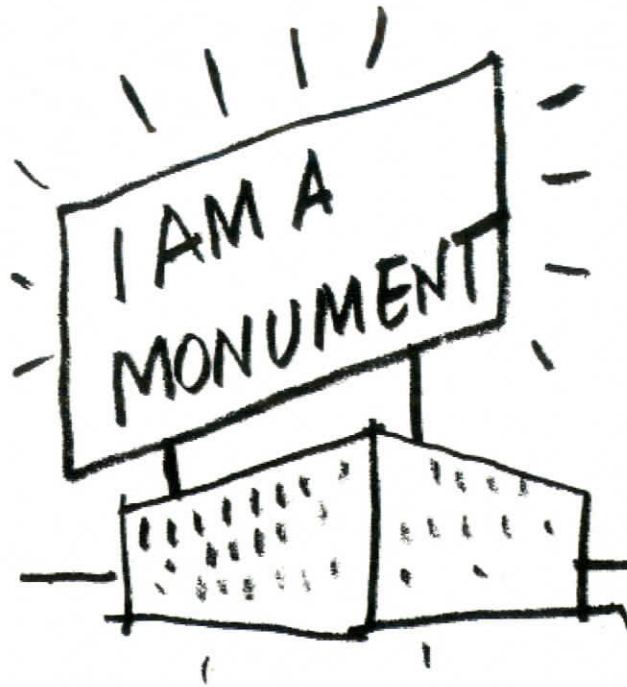
3.1
wall house II
john hedjuk

1973



4.1

plan of the isfahan bazaar



precedents

billboard: the "cynical populism" of
robert venturi

"...complex programs and settings require complex combinations of media beyond the purer architectural triad of structure, form and light at the service of space. They suggest an architecture of bold communication rather than subtle expression" - Robert Venturi in *Learning From Las Vegas*

The explicit acceptance of billboard as precedent and typology for building form emerged through both the unbuilt work and theoretical writing of Robert Venturi in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972), Venturi discusses the emergent typology of the low density strip characteristic of Las Vegas, and the new "architecture of persuasion" that begins to occur through sign, graphic and billboard, necessitated by (relative) scale and the speed necessary to make an impression. For pedestrians on the street, stores communicate through the literal viewing of merchandise through windows, as well as through more phenomenological means, i.e. the smell of cakes at a bakery. For the vehicle based customer, they must communicate that same literal representation, as well as the abstract idea of smell, through signage and graphic. Program begins to project onto facade; a building is not a neutral object, but rather either a literal or symbolic representation of its program.

*"tanya" on the las vegas strip
from learning from las vegas*

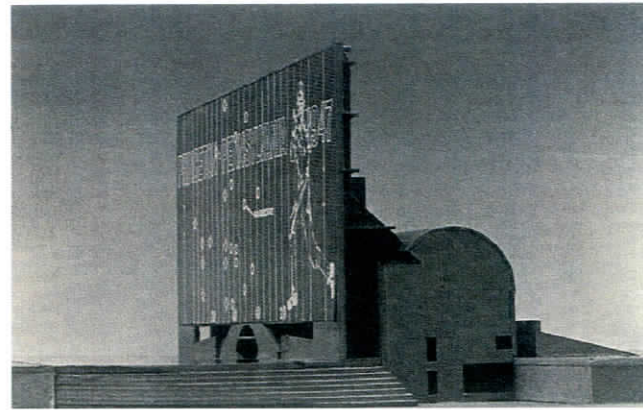


“Critics like Kenneth Frampton, who has a deep and obsessive dislike of Venturi, called this kind of architecture “cynical populism.” For Frampton, populism means, basically, American. It also means something not of the european avant-garde; something vulgar, which somehow plays into the hands of American capitalism by imitating the signs of the strip”- Vincent Scully

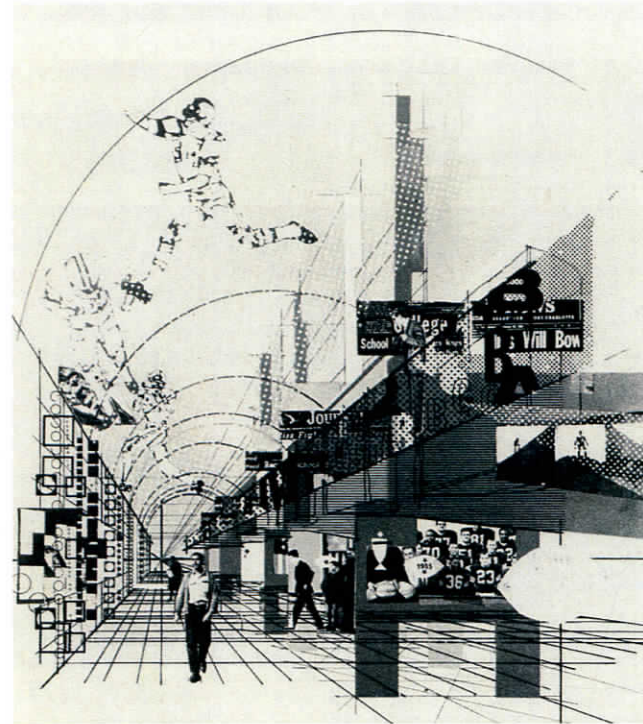
In Venturi and Rausch's 1967 unbuilt project for the National Collegiate Football Hall of Fame in New Brunswick, NJ, Venturi practices the same theory that he espoused five years later in *Learning From Las Vegas*. In this project, Venturi sought to play off the building's site, and the fact that it would be accessed primarily by vehicles in his design. The area in front of the "building board" as Venturi termed the project, was to be a parking lot, where patrons could drive up to the giant screen, upon which football games, as well as other graphic information could be presented. In *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies*, Rafael Moneo writes "The huge screen is a mobile, active facade, a facade that doesn't indulge in the static, ritual condition of traditional facades, but which, like them (like the facades of venetian mansions, for instance) generates a vertical plane that becomes the building's image."

Aside from Las Vegas, it is hard to think of anywhere where vertical plane as building image could be any more relevant than L.A.

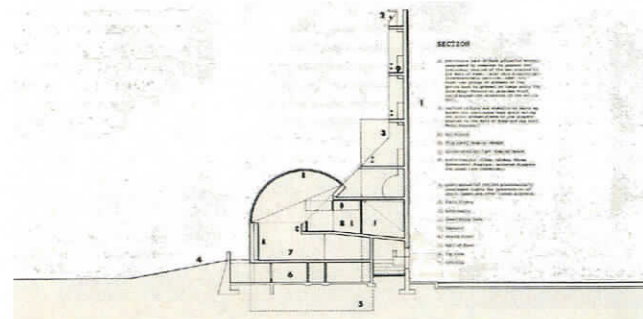
“the graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape”. - Robert Venturi



model of national collegiate
football hall of fame



interior perspective



section

mahorka pavilion



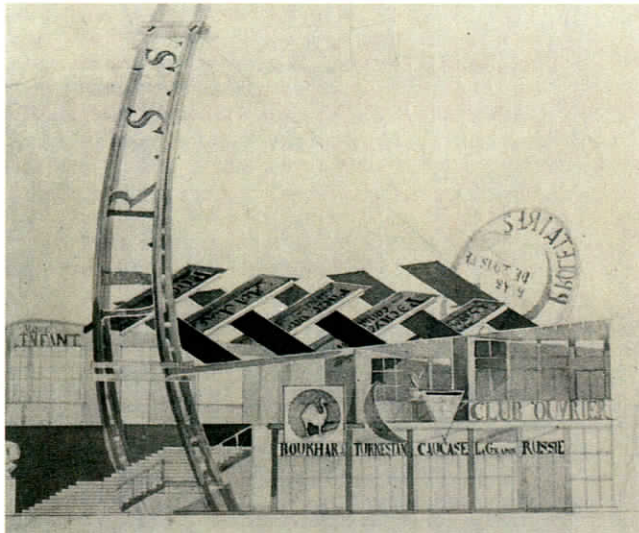
konstantin melnikov

pavilions . text . graphic . flattening

Pavilion architecture for various fairs was, in the early half of the twentieth century, one of the great outlets for which architects could express bolder statements of their own ideology than usually possible in practice. Along with that, exposition architecture tends to be about attraction and persuasion, using cues, surface and frontality to attract fairgoers into the pavilion. The Soviet architect Konstantin Melnikov, in three separate pavilion projects, addresses this ability and necessity in innovative ways.

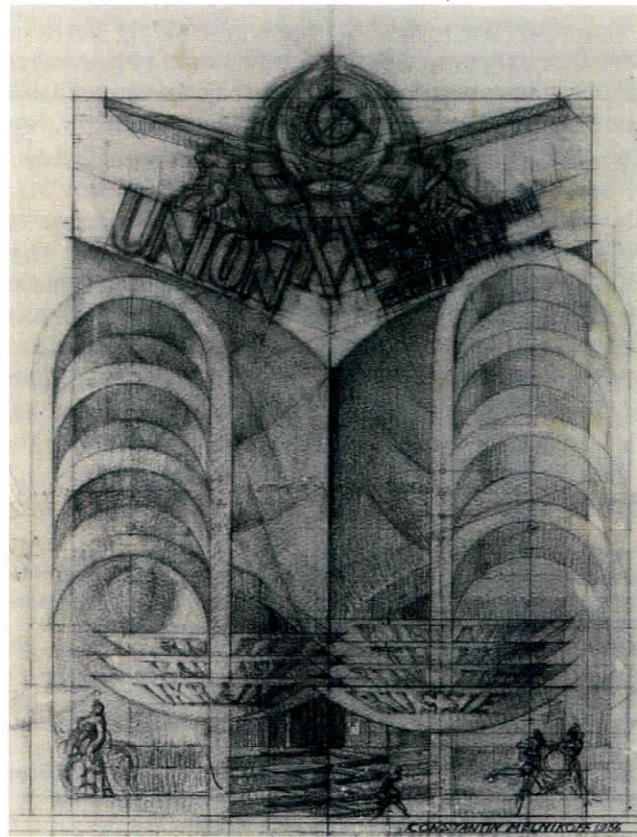
Firstly, the Mahorka Pavilion, for the 1923 "First Agricultural and Cottage Industries Exhibition of the U.S.S.R." in Moscow; a building to advertise and promote the sale of the Mahorka brand of tobacco. The building is laid out to be a demonstration of the tobacco production process, but most significantly, the major facade element is that of the "supergraphic", one of the earliest applications of such a technique. Much like Venturi's National Collegiate Football Hall of Fame, the billboard surface is the highest point in the building, with the roof structure working in such a way to be both physically and visually propping up the billboard.

*soviet pavilion (1923)
early scheme*



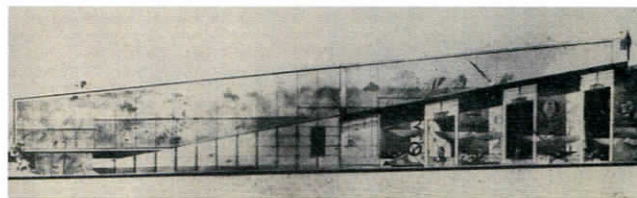
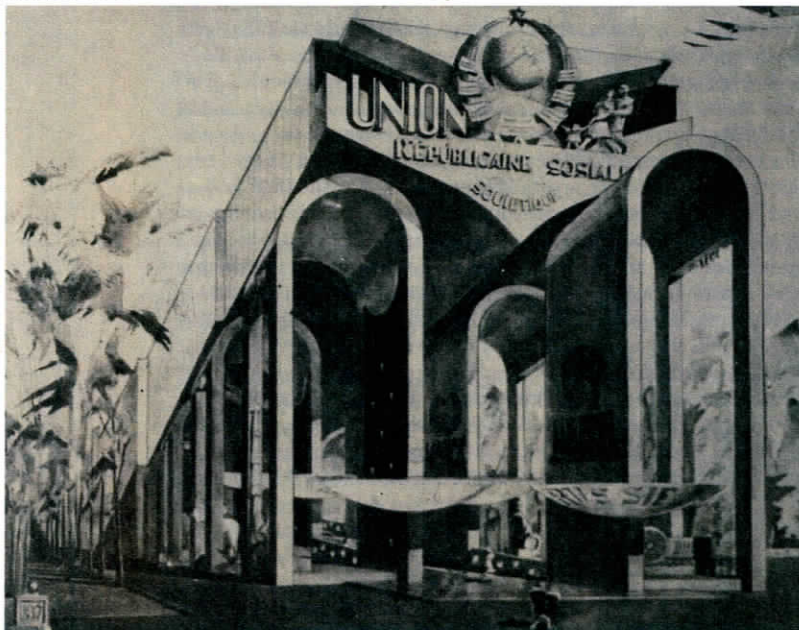
In an early scheme for Melnikov's Soviet Pavilion for the 1925 World's Fair in Paris, the architectural expression is coupled with textual representation of the nations being represented within. In effect, the whole, three dimensional building acts as a billboard, rather than just a flattened, applied surface. When viewed in elevation, however, the three dimensional elements, such as the roof "lattice", layer upon each other in such a way that it reads as a flat billboard.

The drawings for Melnikov's Soviet Pavilion for the 1939 World's Fair make an interesting point in terms of the use of perspective and distortion. At first glance, the "short" elevation appears to be simply looking down an extremely long hall with two separate arched vaults; in fact, the hall, by no means short, has been visually lengthened by the slope that is evident in section. By sloping the roof and offsetting the vaults, the somewhat traditional vaulted condition that one might assume exists is soon disproven by a "slight of hand". As the vaults get shorter over the course of the slope, the "bowls" that hang off them move higher up the walls, further distorting common visual perceptions by forcing the perspective.

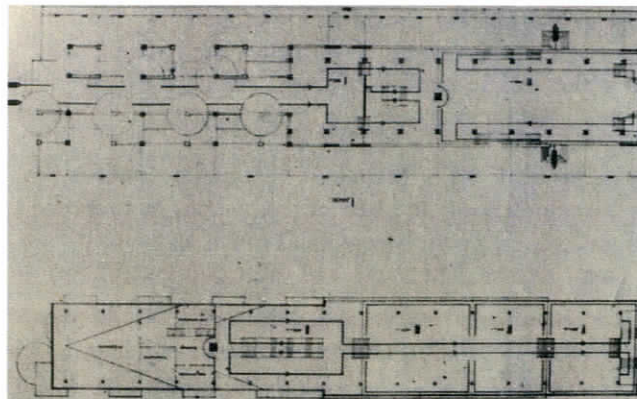


soviet pavilion(1939)
"short" elevation

perspective



section



plan



text identity

SITE

"it is the objective of SITE to increase the communicative level of buildings and public spaces by drawing on sources outside of architecture's formal, functional, and symbolic conventions"- SITE

The architecture of the collaborative SITE works in the same theoretical vein as Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas*, yet the product is radically different. Where Venturi seeks to apply the logic of the strip onto building programs and typologies not currently a part of the strip typology, SITE seeks to take the typical program of strip america, the "big box" store, and push the limits of its envelope as a means of expression, a work of art.

SITE designed a number of product showrooms for the BEST company; "BEST Anti-Sign", pictured at left is in Ashland, VA, built in 1978. The collaborative takes a new, independent direction for each showroom, rather than operating in the typical manner for big box development of building copies off a mold. In this example, the designers ran through a series of concepts about how the text "BEST" could be torqued, troped, distorted and overlaid in such a way that the name becomes the image of the store; its assertive identity. the photo of the store implies a system of overlayment and depth to the text, with some letters (and parts of letters) being more dominant and to the forefront, and others more subservient and to the rear; but in fact it is printed onto metal panels which are then affixed onto conventional block construction.

panels being attached



text studies



applied graphic:tokyo: klein dytham architecture's "billboard building"

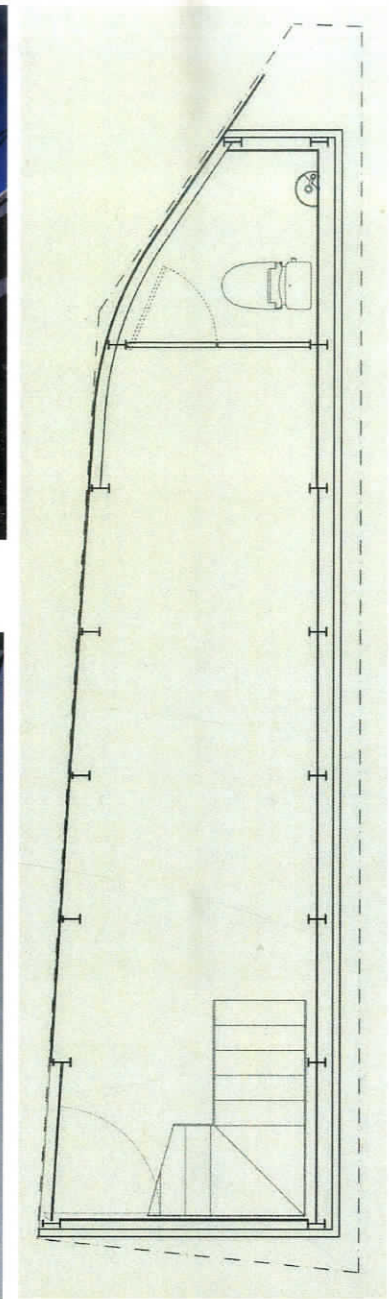
"Sitting in front of another building but unrelated to it, it faces a well used road. instead of trying to circumvent the near two-dimensional nature of the site, the architect decided to make the most of it, treating it as a billboard"- Ruth Slavid in Micro: Very Small Buildings

Tokyo's "Billboard Building" by Klein Dytham Architecture takes a piece of land that in most cities, would be discarded as unbuildable, and transforms it into a studio for a jeweler that also serves as an active surface through screening, color and light.

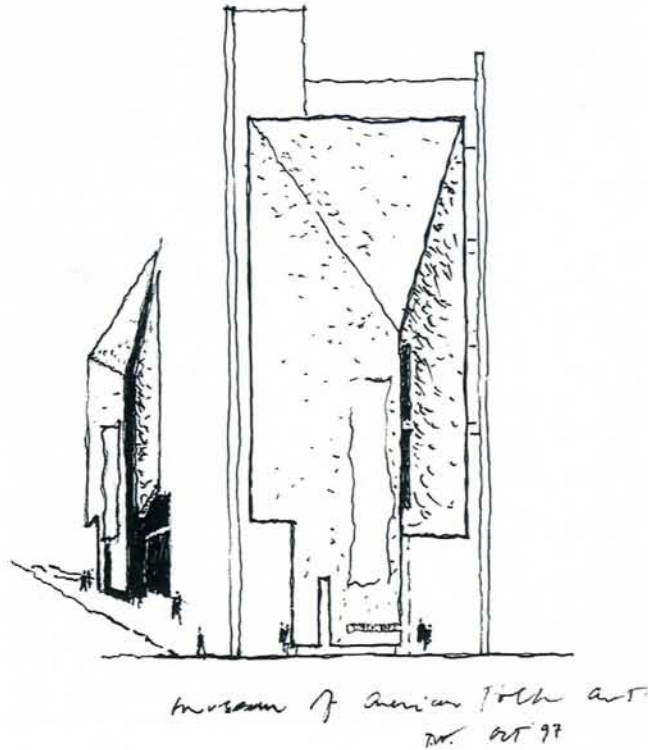
The diminutive building is truly just a sliver; it is 36 feet long, but only 8 feet, 3 inches wide at its long side. At its short end, it is only 23.5 inches. Into this space, the architect has managed to fit a bathroom and shop on the first floor, and a studio and kitchenette on the second. The building's elegance lies in its simplicity; it is a simple formal gesture, a tapering plane, with the facade composed of silkscreened bamboo in the negative on glass. The entire building is "white" other than the back wall, which is painted green; the "bamboo" is thus read as green from the exterior. During the day, the silkscreening provides shade, while at night when the building is illuminated, it clearly reads as a glowing field of bamboo, and functions much like an electronic, commercial billboard. Its siting on blank end of an existing building on a major road makes this approach all the more contextual.



interior looking towards w.c.



plan



surface follows collection

williams+tsien's american folk art museum

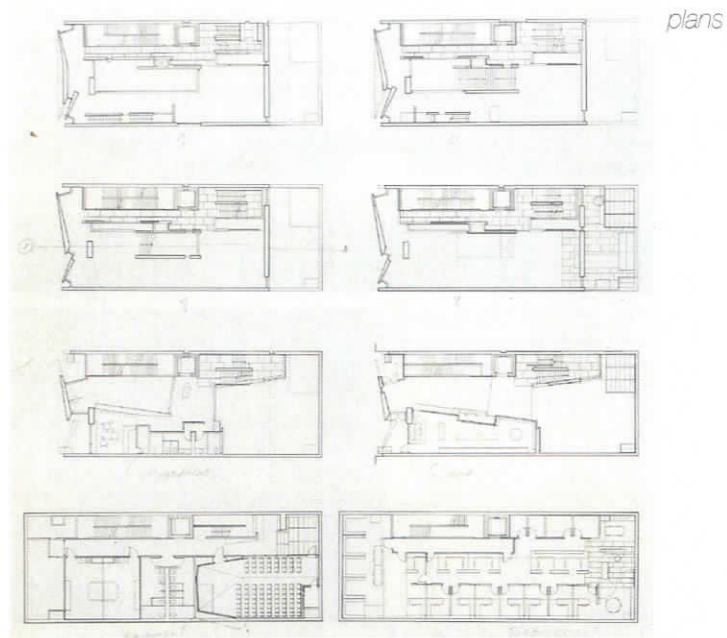
The American Folk Art Museum, located on East 53rd Street in New York City, is a building which has used its facade as a means to assert its identity and individuality. The museum is a part of the Museum of Modern Art (NYC), and resides on its campus, but operates as a wholly independent entity with its own facility, staff, collection, etc... It is located directly adjacent to the MOMA, and as such, needed a building that would show that it is independent, despite its location.

The firm Williams+Tsien took this to heart in the design process and designed a compact yet complex museum that is only 20 feet wide. Museum functions are arranged over eight levels, with the top four devoted to permanent collections and special exhibitions, the main (entry) level devoted to ticketing and a bookstore that can function independent of museum hours and entrances, a mezzanine with coffee bar, and two underground levels; the lowest containing museum offices, a library and an archive, and the one directly beneath the entry containing the museum's auditorium and classrooms. In addition to the four gallery levels, art is integrated into the public spaces throughout the museum; and the building is conceived of as an "architectural journey" where multiple circulation paths that are occasionally redundant allow the visitor to experience the museum in different ways on each visit. Overall, the building has an irregular, intimate, handcrafted sense to it, befitting the collection.

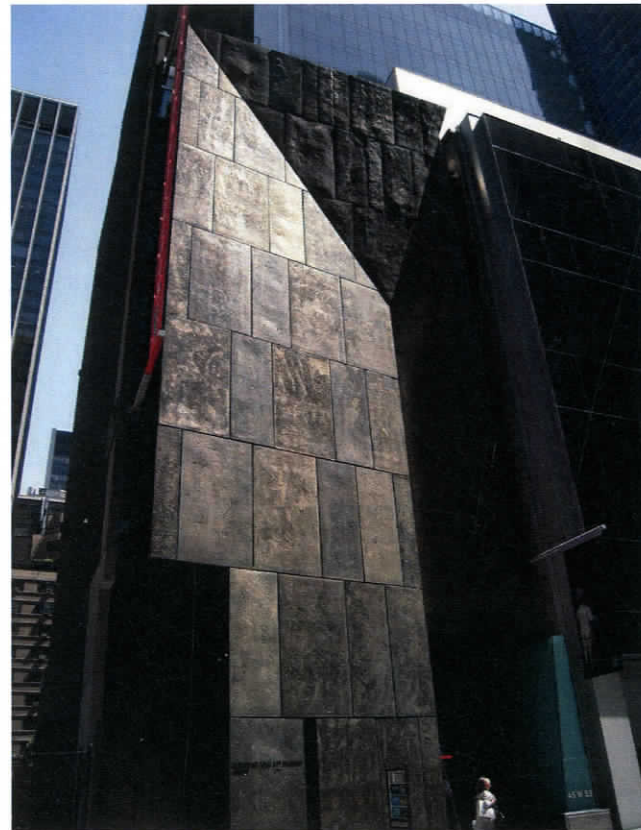
facade detail



Perhaps though, the 53rd street facade is the most interesting part of the building. The architects conceived of the facade as an abstracted representation of an open hand; metaphorically representing the handcrafted nature of the collection within. The material used is Tombasil, a form of white bronze, that was cast into panels on the concrete floor of a factory, giving it its irregular appearance. The visual “heft” of the panels is somewhat negated by the way that they are hung; there are reveals between the panels that reveal the wall of the weather barrier that sits behind. The faceting of the planes also provides for glazed reveals in section, which allow one to read the facade as a contradictory statement of visual weight and physical lightness.



plans

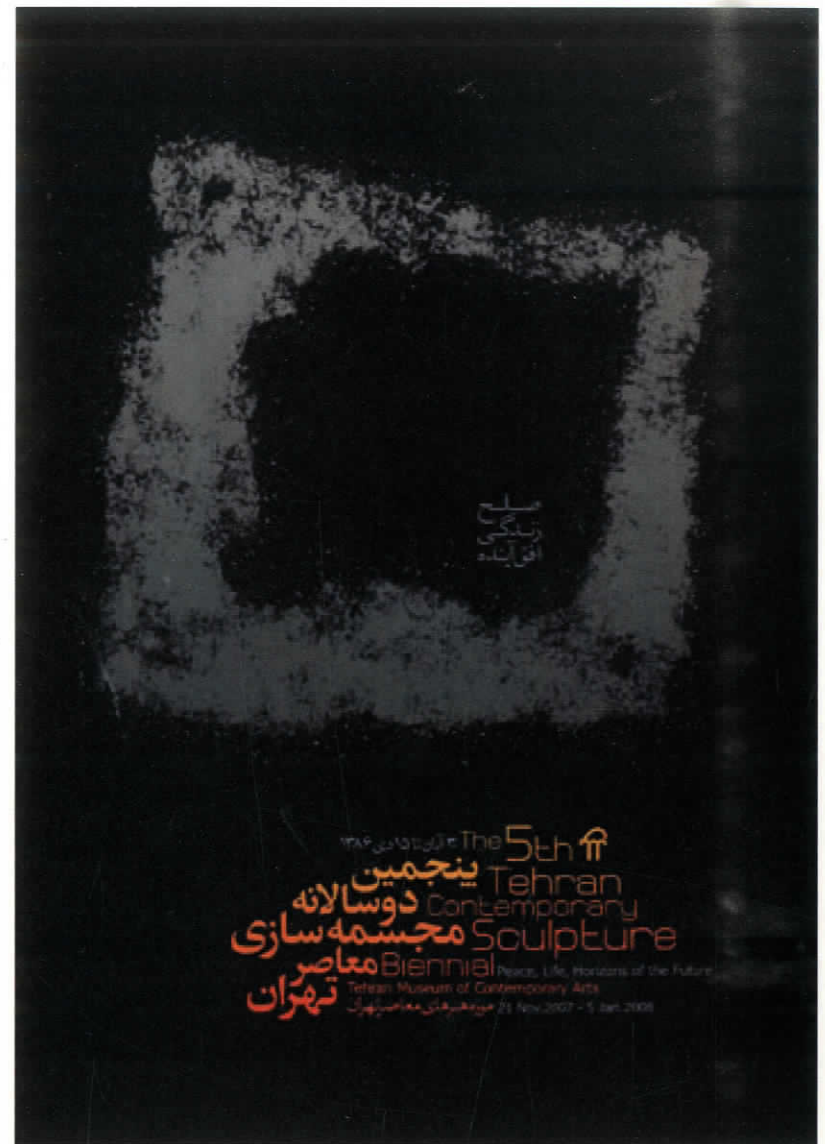
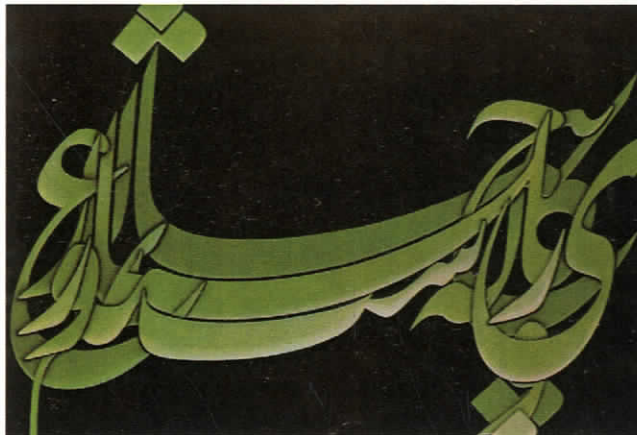


facade

untitled
farah ossuli



farsi calligraphy abstracted into a
grasshopper



the collection-typological overview

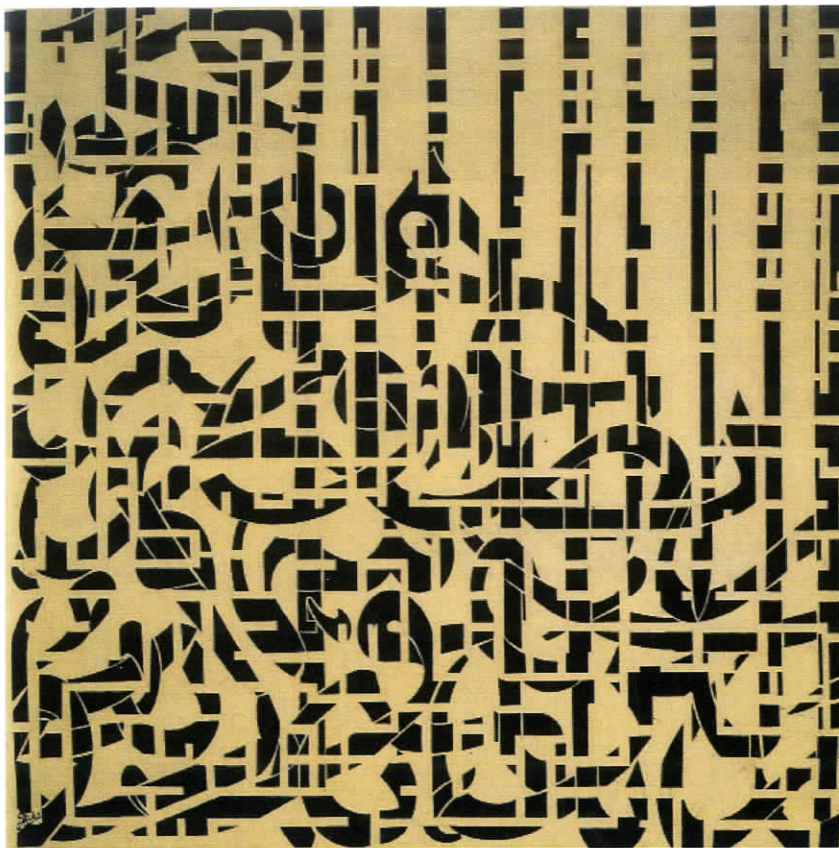
Contemporary Persian art is characterized by its propensity to straddle the cultural divide between east and west. This is evident in the works of artists both living in Iran, as well as those who were displaced in the diaspora. The endurance of traditional craft is a prevailing quality in many works, although the subject matter and technique have been altered, often as a commentary to the condition of living in the modern age in a country with a government that seeks to force tradition. This “updating” can be seen in the work of Farah Ossuli, who inverts the logic of the traditional painting of the Persian album, while preserving technique.



calligraphy
nasrollah afjai
1975
the combination of farsi script
with geometric rigor produces an
abstract texture rife with
meaning.



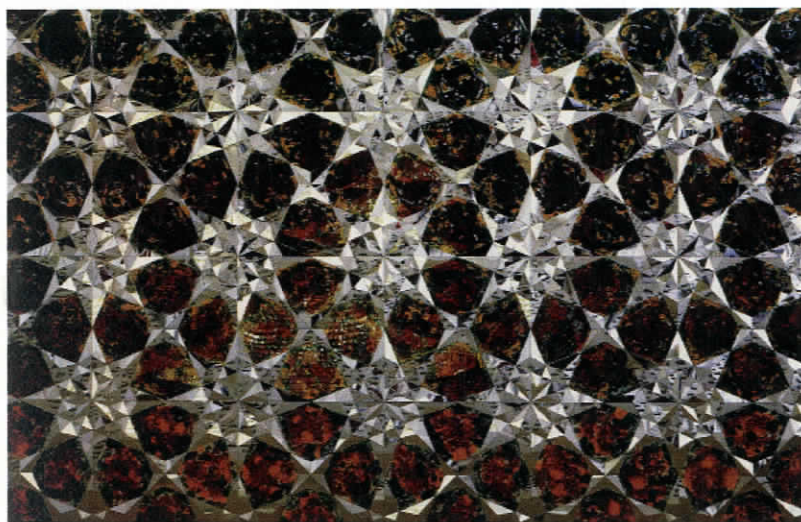
(top left)
installation
hossein khosrojerdi
"manifestations of contemporary
art in iran" exhibition; tehran
museum of contemporary art,
2007



(left center)
hale
hossein zenderoudi
1984

(center)
tehran street art
2000's

From technical and geometric mirror to ad-hoc and democratic street art to evocative and spare installations, viewing Persian contemporary art in a linear and chronological manner begins to abstractly piece together the emotional fluctuation of the people of Iran since 1950. Linear sequences of art tell history.



tehran street art
a1one
2000's

(bottom left)
mirror panel
monir farmanfarmian
1970's

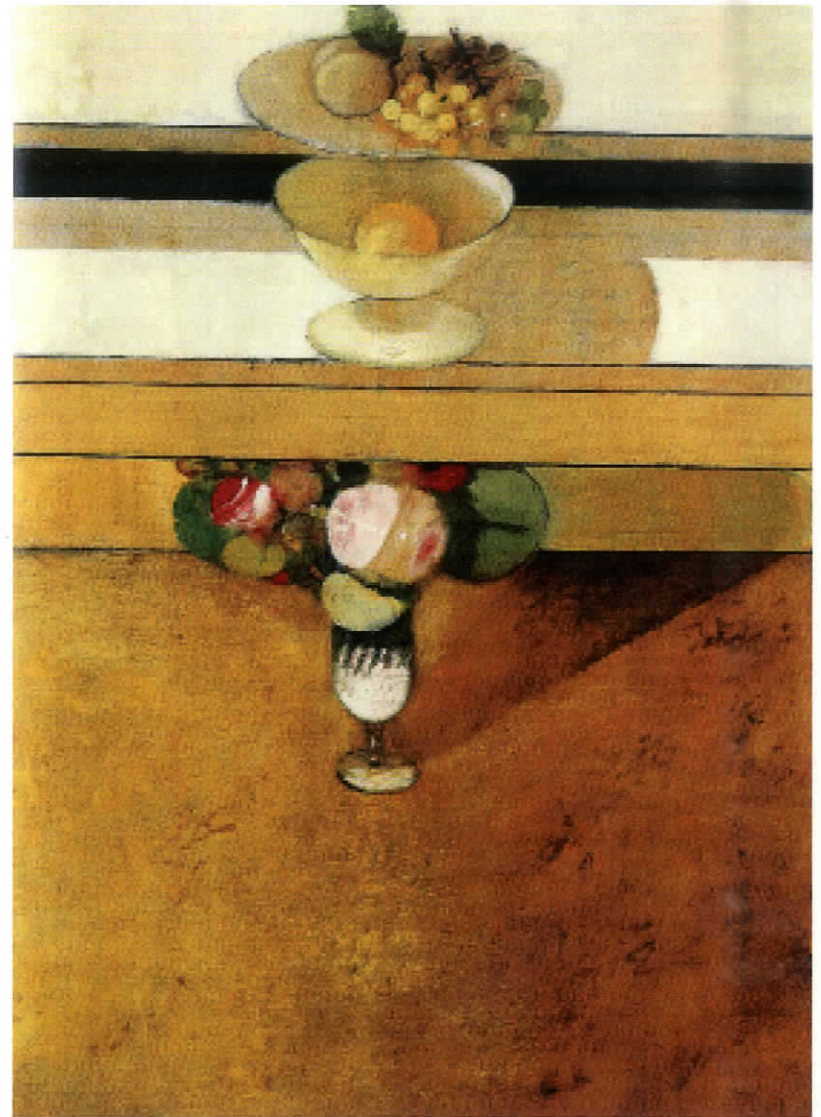
"bird"
amir rad



untitled
monir farmanfarmian



(above right)
still life with plate and fruit
abol qassem sadi
1990-93



The textured, geometric surfaces of earlier eras of Iran are not absent in the contemporary discourse; indeed it lives on through work such as Monir Farmanfarmian's *Untitled*, which uses mirrored elements to reflect and create a condition of depth and Hossein Zenderoudi's, which uses the strokes of calligraphic script to create a visual field of texture, with variation in lights and darks, as well as irregularity of stroke. This form of work updates the traditional ways of thinking.



"eyn + eyn"
hossein zenderoudi
1970



(far left)
untitled
shadi ghadirian
1998

Conditions of depth, surface, distortion and texture are also evident in other forms of media, such as photography, sculpture, and video. The installation (right) of the work of graphic designer Reza Abedini is a combination of all three: *"This exhibition shows Abedini's appreciation of Persian tradition, the historic material he uses as inspiration, his contemporary designs and the work of his students at the university of Teheran. The combination of image and typography is the most distinguishing characteristic of his work."* - platform 21



"visual language of reza abedini"
installation, platform 21,
amsterdam, NL
reza abedini
2000's

**the following pages
contain the actual
works to be contained
in the museum**

calligraphy

- 001 **hossein zenderoudi**
 quand prendrons-nous le the ensemble?
 1977
 130x203 cm
 51x80 in



- 002 **hossein zenderoudi**
 hale
 1984
 163x106 cm
 64x42 in



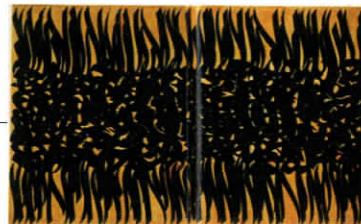
- 003 **hossein zenderoudi**
 eyn+eyn
 1970
 195x130 cm
 77x51 in



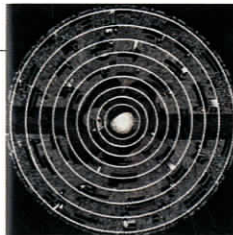
- 004 **mohammad esai**
 the entanglements of khayyam
 1967
 100x137 cm
 40x54 in



- 005 **mohammad esai**
 the echo of the word
 1990
 160x310 cm
 63x122 in



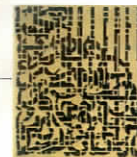
- 006 **faramarz pilaram**
 untitled
 1975
 200x200 cm
 78x78 in



- 007 **nasrollah afjai**
 calligraphy
 1972
 65x65 cm
 26x26 in



008 **nasrollah afjai**
calligraphy
1975
64x64 cm
26x26 in



009 **reza mafi**
poetry
1977
76x100 cm
30x40 in



010 **reza mafi**
untitled
1982
108x150 cm
43x60 in



011 **mohammad ali taraghijah**
tranquil soul
1992
31x24 cm
13x10 in



012 **mohammad ali taraghijah**
research no.5
1991
32x26 cm
13x10 in




















013 **malieh afnan**
letter of an illiterate
1980
48x63 cm
18.89x24.8 in



painting

001 **hossein zenderoudi**
untitled
1959-62
154x100 cm
60x40 in



- 002 **koorosh shishegaran**
untitled
1988
128x133 cm
50x52.36 in
- 
- 
- 003 **koorosh shishegaran**
untitled
1985
186x140 cm
73.2x55.1 in
- 
- 
- 004 **massoud arabshahi**
untitled
1964
103x89 cm
40.55x35 in
- 
- 
- 005 **massoud arabshahi**
untitled
1967
135x65 cm
53.14x25.6 in
- 
- 
- 006 **massoud arabshahi**
space on my mind I,II,III,IV
1981
100x70 cm
40x27.5 in
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 007 **jaafar rouhbakhsh**
untitled
1988
180x150 cm
70.86x59 in
- 
- 
- 008 **jaafar rouhbakhsh**
composition
1994
61x31 cm
24x12.2 in
- 
- 
- 009 **jaafar rouhbakhsh**
untitled
1989
160x90 cm
63x35.43 in
- 

010 **mansour qandriz**
untitled
1963
115x80 cm
45.27x31.49 in



011 **sohrab sephehi**
the body of trees
undated
105x200 cm
41.33x78.74 in



012 **sohrab sephehi**
untitled
1972
117x147 cm
46.06x57.87 in



013 **sohrab sephehi**
stones
undated
200x200 cm
78.74x78.74 in



014 **abol qassem saidi**
abstracton of flowers
1973
164x212 cm
64.56x83.46 in



015 **abol qassem saidi**
still life with plate and fruit
1990-93
145x92 cm
57.08x36.22 in

016 **alireza esphabod**
three crows
undated
126x200 cm
49.66x78.74 in



017 **bahman mohassess**
still life
1968
70x100 cm
27.55x40 in



018 **aydeen aghdashlou**
 anno 1373
 1994-97
 77x57 cm
 30.31x22.44 in



019 **aydeen aghdashlou**
 memories of ice and fire III
 1980
 77x57 cm
 30.31x22.44 in



020 **qassem hadjizadeh**
 a red haired man and a black haired man
 1975
 136x136 cm
 53.54x53.54 in



021 **hojatollah shakiba**
 qajar woman
 undated
 50x35 cm
 19.68x13.77 in



022 **hojatollah shakiba**
 untitled
 1980
 71x101 cm
 27.95x39.76 in



023 **khosrow hassanzadeh**
 do i have to sign
 1999
 180x120 cm
 70.86x47.24 in



024 **khosrow hassanzadeh**
 three comrades
 1997-98
 250x180 cm
 98.45x70.86 in



025 **khosrow hassanzadeh**
 helmet
 1997-98
 250x180 cm
 98.45x70.86 in



mixed media

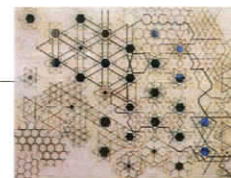
001 **monir farmanfarmaian**

untitled

undated

98x140 cm

38.58x55.11 in

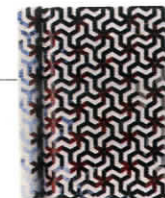
002 **monir farmanfarmaian**

untitled

undated

103x103 cm

40.55x40.55 in

003 **marcos grigorian**

rebirth

1970

70x70 cm

27.55x27.55 in

004 **marcos grigorian**

untitled

1973

165x200 cm

64.96x78.74 in

005 **parviz kalantari**

from the series mudvision

1999-2000

100x100 cm

40x40 in

006 **parviz kalantari**

the wise sees within the raw clay

1999

50x70 cm

19.68x27.55 in

007 **fereydoun ave**

roostam in late summer

1998

75.5x110 cm

29.72x43.30 in



008 **fereydoun ave**
rostand in late summer
1998
112x75 cm
44.09x29.52 in



009 **fereydoun ave**
rostand and sohrab III
1999
110x75 cm
43.30x29.52 in



010 **fereydoun ave**
rostand and sohrab I
1999
75x75 cm
29.52x29.52 in

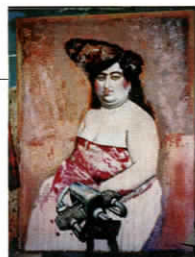


011 **fereydoun ave**
rostand and sohrab II
1999
75x80 cm
29.52x31.49 in



photography

001 **qassem hadjizadeh**
artist's studio
1998
the painting is a portrait of the
taj-ol-saltaneh (1990)



002 **shadi ghadirian**
untitled
1998
(four photographs)
relational size



003 **shirin neshat**
untitled
1996
121.8x85.7 cm
47.95x33.74 in



- 001** **parviz tanavoli**
 heech&cage I
 1972
 14x21x16 cm
 5.51x8.26x6.3 in



- 002** **parviz tanavoli**
 the walls of iran II
 1977
 209x108x63 cm
 82.28x42.5x24.8 in



- 003** **parviz tanavoli**
 hand on hand
 2000
 51x22.5x12.5 cm
 20x8.85x5 in



- 004** **parviz tanavoli**
 heech!
 1962
 77x50x30 cm
 30.3x19.68x11.8 in



- 005** **parviz tanavoli**
 ooh! limou limou
 1962
 65x40x22 cm
 26.74x15.75x8.66 in



- 006** **bita fayyazi**
 cockroaches
 1998
 length 15cm each
 5.90in



- 007** **shirazeh houshiary**
 isthmus
 1992
 340x220x90 cm, 340x500x90 cm
 133.85x86.61x35.43 in, 133.85x196.85x35.43 in



008 **shirazeh houshiary**
the image of heart
1991
13x98.5 cm diam
5.11x38.77 in diam



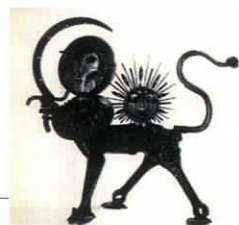
009 **siah armajani**
room for the last anarchist noam chomsky
1998
290x183x73 cm
114.17x72.04x28.74 in



010 **ruyin pakbaz**
construction
1967
50x50 cm
19.68x19.68 in



011 **jazeh tabatabai**
lioness and sun lady no. 12
1960
140x60x40 cm
55.11x23.62x15.74 in



012 **parviz tanavoli**
heech
undated
h 30 cm
h 11.81 in



013 **ali mahdavi**
untitled
2000
h 70 cm
h 27.55 in



video

001 **ghazel**
vid series "me"
1998-2000



002 **shirin neshat**
rapture
1999
production still



printmaking

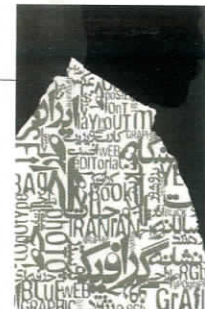
001

reza abedini

various works: posters

dates vary

varied sizes-kept in flat files



graffiti/street art

001

"a1one"

site-specific urban art installations



site(s)

The program of the museum will be dispersed over two sites; the southeast corner of Westwood and Wilkins, and along an existing party wall just south of the intersection of Westwood and Ohio.

Each site will have a specific “function” that distinguishes itself from the other two in both programmatic and formal terms.

By dispersing the program into two sites, Westwood Boulevard becomes part of the museum’s circulation, telling the story of the diaspora through seeing it firsthand. This engages the patron from outside of the neighborhood, who may not have been to the strip before, or be familiar with Persian culture to begin to witness it firsthand.

The organization of the two functions will operate in a manner similar to that of the type of spatial planning evidenced in both the stores on Westwood, as well as the facades in Beverly Hills; the three-part organization, with the central object the most hierarchical; the “hub”.

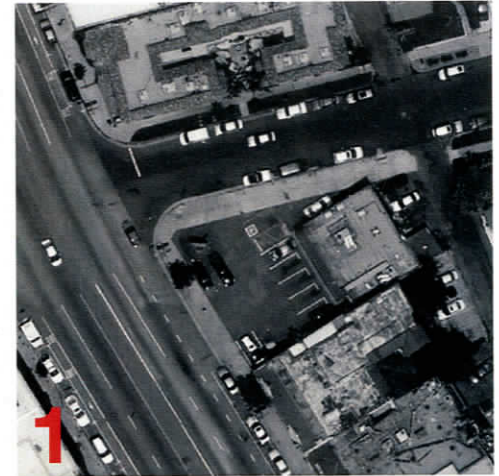
The function of each site has some degree of correlation to its immediate context.

For the motorist driving up Westwood, the enfilade is to function in a manner similar to the banners that hang off flagpoles; through repetition of appropriate scale and placement, the reinforcement and suggestion of an idea.



site #1 - "the hub"

The lynchpin of the museum, "the hub" is the central site of the three. As it stands today, 2/3 of the site is occupied by parking, while the remaining 1/3 is occupied by a convenience store. This site is the northern anchor of the block that is arguably the center of Little Persia, the block where the annual Norooz celebration takes place. It is opposite the Attari sandwich shop, the first Persian business in the neighborhood, and the Ketab bookstore, the largest seller of Persian-language books outside Iran. Its role as the hub will be to contain the most central museum functions; the permanent collections, library, and auditorium. In doing so, it can function as a center for research and community meetings and events.

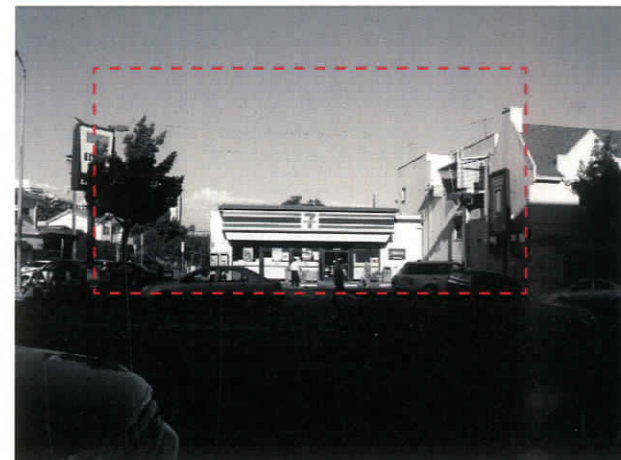
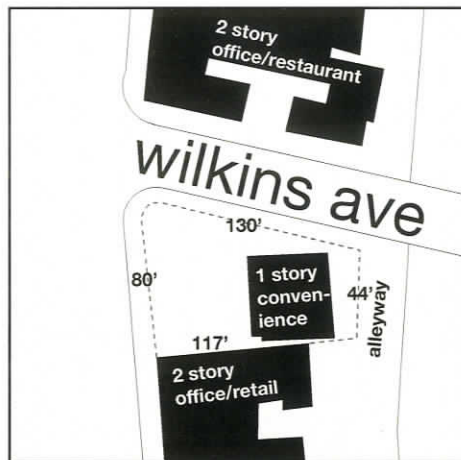


site #2 - "the billboard"

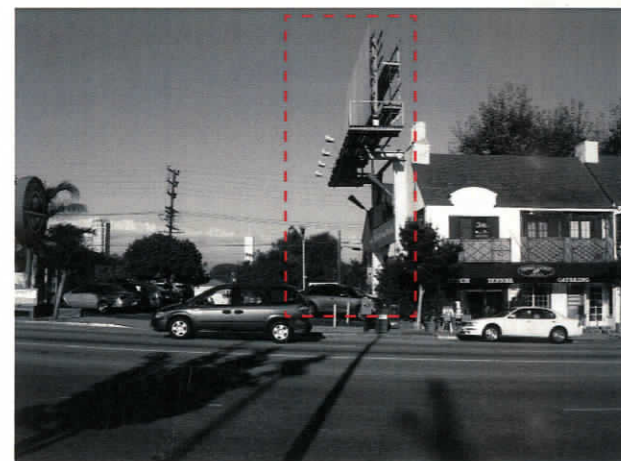
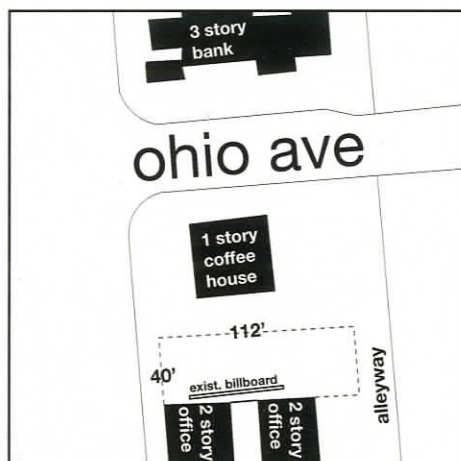
At this moment, "the billboard" is just that. The site is currently a parking lot for The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf at the intersection of Westwood and Ohio. At the south edge of the site is a party wall; on the otherside is a 1930's era garden court. Mounted on the party wall is a billboard, currently devoid of advertising. the function of this portion is to serve as a long distance representation for the museum; to project the museum into a greater context while providing linear space for collections and exhibitions which are based on constructive narratives.



"the hub"
7,500 sf



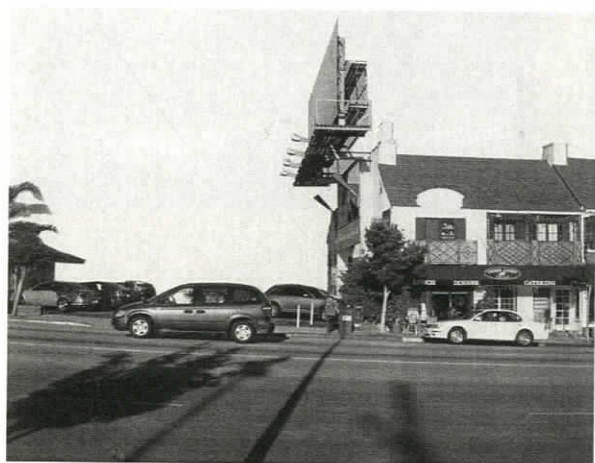
"the billboard"
4,400 sf



existing conditions / context

key attribute

site in elevation



foreground / frontal condition

mid-afternoon

| <i>type</i> | <i>space</i> | <i>square feet</i> | <i>#</i> | <i>subtotal total</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|
| permanent collection | painting gallery | 4000 | 1 | 4000 |
| | calligraphy gallery | 2500 | 1 | 2500 |
| | photography gallery | 1000 | 2 | 2000 |
| | video.electronic | 250 | 2 | 500 |
| | print."street art" gallery | 2000 | 1 | 2000 |
| | sculpture gallery | 2500 | 1 | 2500 |
| | | | | subtotal: 12400 |
| special exhibition | large special exhibition hall | 5000 | 1 | 5000 |
| | medium special exhibition hall | 2000 | 1 | 2000 |
| | small/short term exhibition gallery | 1000 | 3 | 3000 |
| | | | | subtotal: 10000 |
| education | lecture hall | 2000 | 1 | 2000 |
| | classroom/studio | 250 | 2 | 500 |
| | artist in residence apartment | 1000 | 1 | 1000 |
| | artist (in residence) studio | 500 | 1 | 500 |
| | | | | subtotal: 4000 |
| patron amenities | cafe | 400 | 1 | 400 |
| | bookstore | 800 | 1 | 800 |
| | library | 800 | 1 | 800 |
| | tickets.membership.support | 300 | 1 | 300 |
| | restrooms | 300 | 3 | 900 |
| | | | | subtotal: 3200 |
| administrative | director's office and support | 350 | 1 | 350 |
| | educational staff | 250 | 1 | 250 |
| | administration and finance | 250 | 1 | 250 |
| | public affairs.marketing staff | 350 | 1 | 350 |
| | curatorial staff | 350 | 1 | 350 |
| | admin storage | 100 | 1 | 100 |
| | | | | subtotal: 1650 |
| back of house | cafe prep.storage | 200 | 1 | 200 |
| | bookstore storage | 250 | 1 | 250 |
| | exhibit prep.workshop | 1000 | 1 | 1000 |
| | collection storage | 6000 | 1 | 6000 |
| | loading.trash | 500 | 1 | 500 |
| | custodial | 80 | 3 | 240 |
| | | | | subtotal: 8190 |

accumulated total:39440

circulation.mechanical (20% of subtotal):7888

total: 47,328 sf

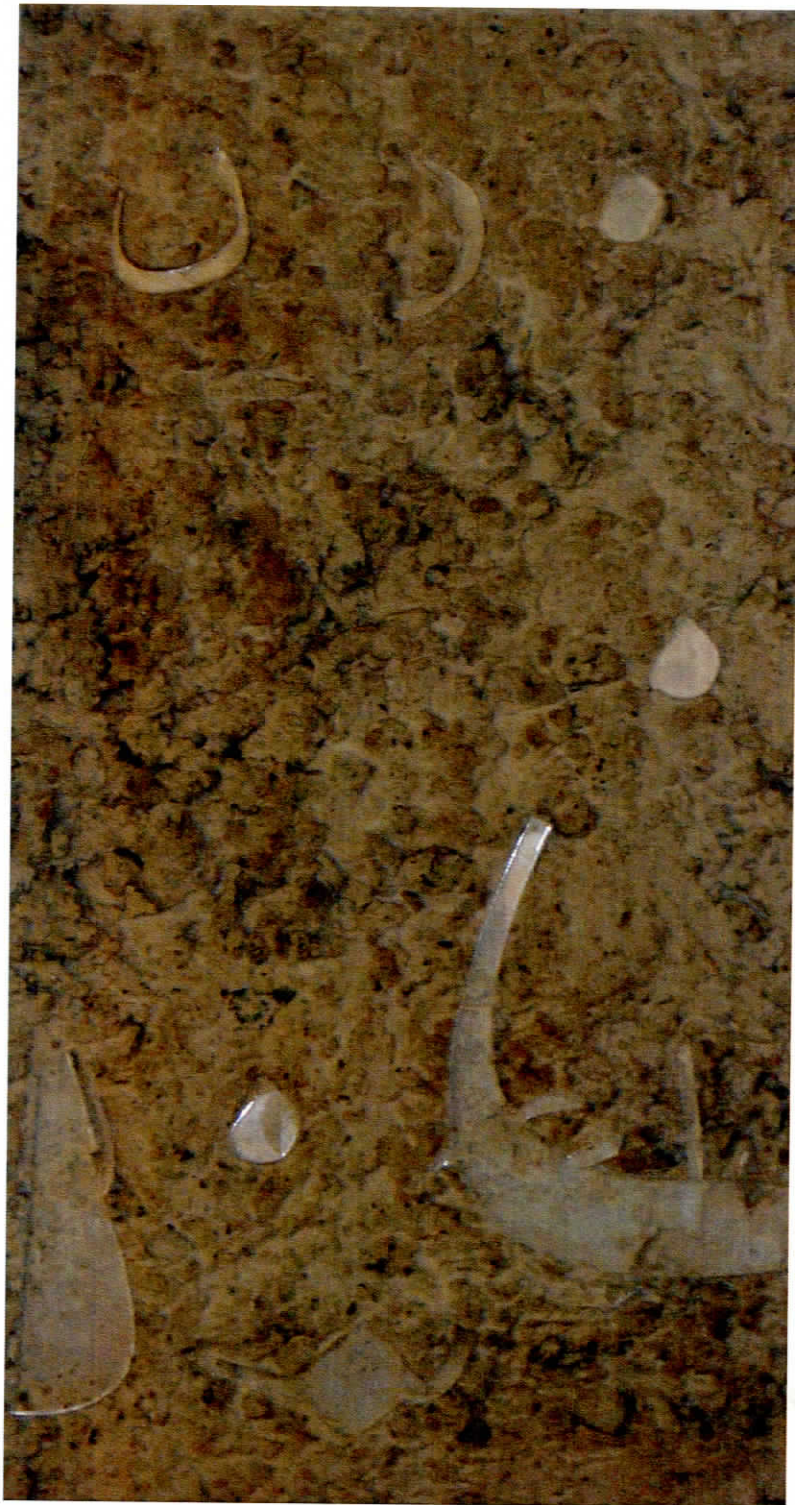


"the hub"



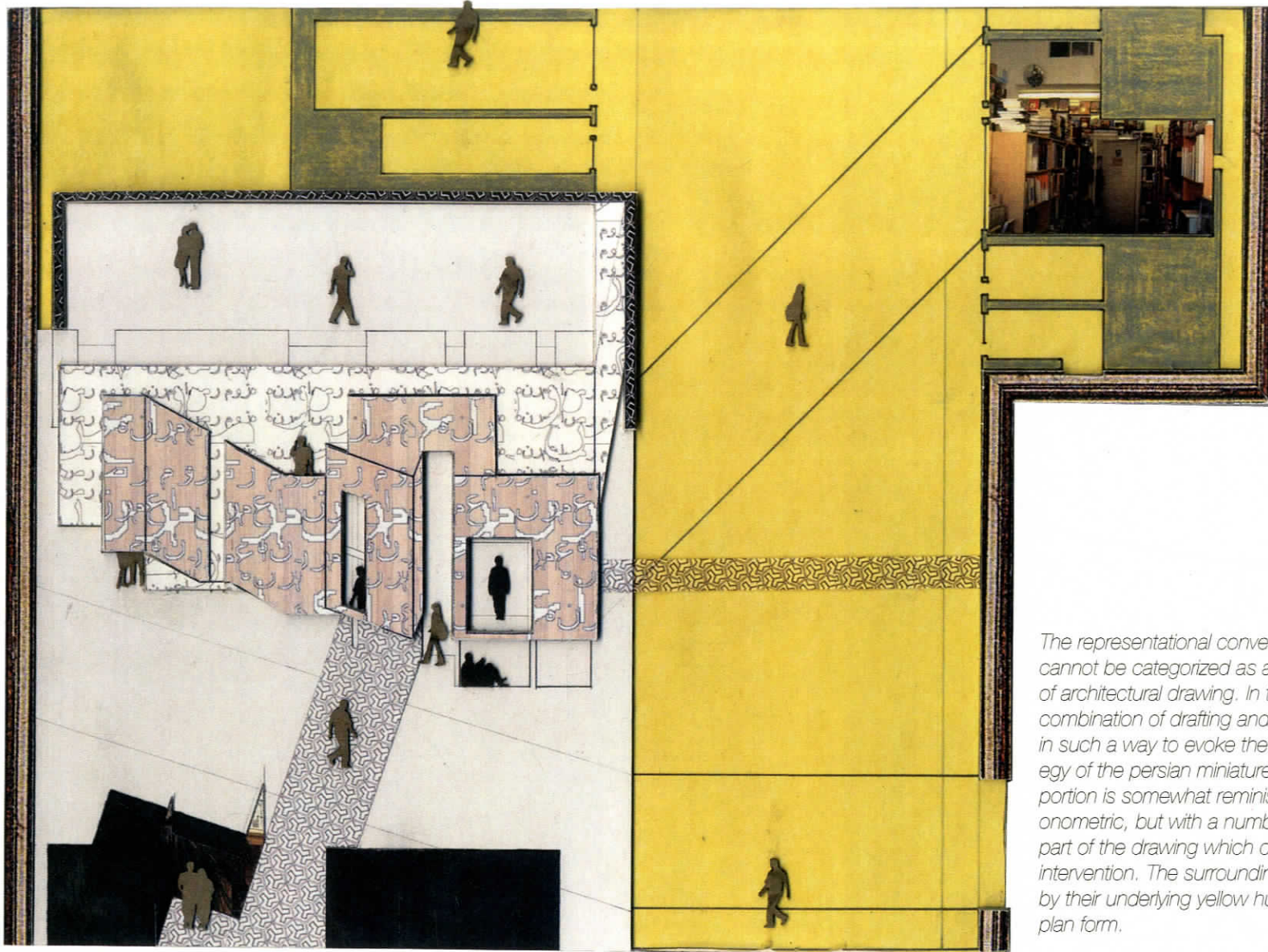
"the billboard"

The program distributions above are only a rough approximation of how the different elements of the museum would be dispersed based on the role that each individual site plays in the overall whole of the institution.



d e s i g n

the museum as miniature

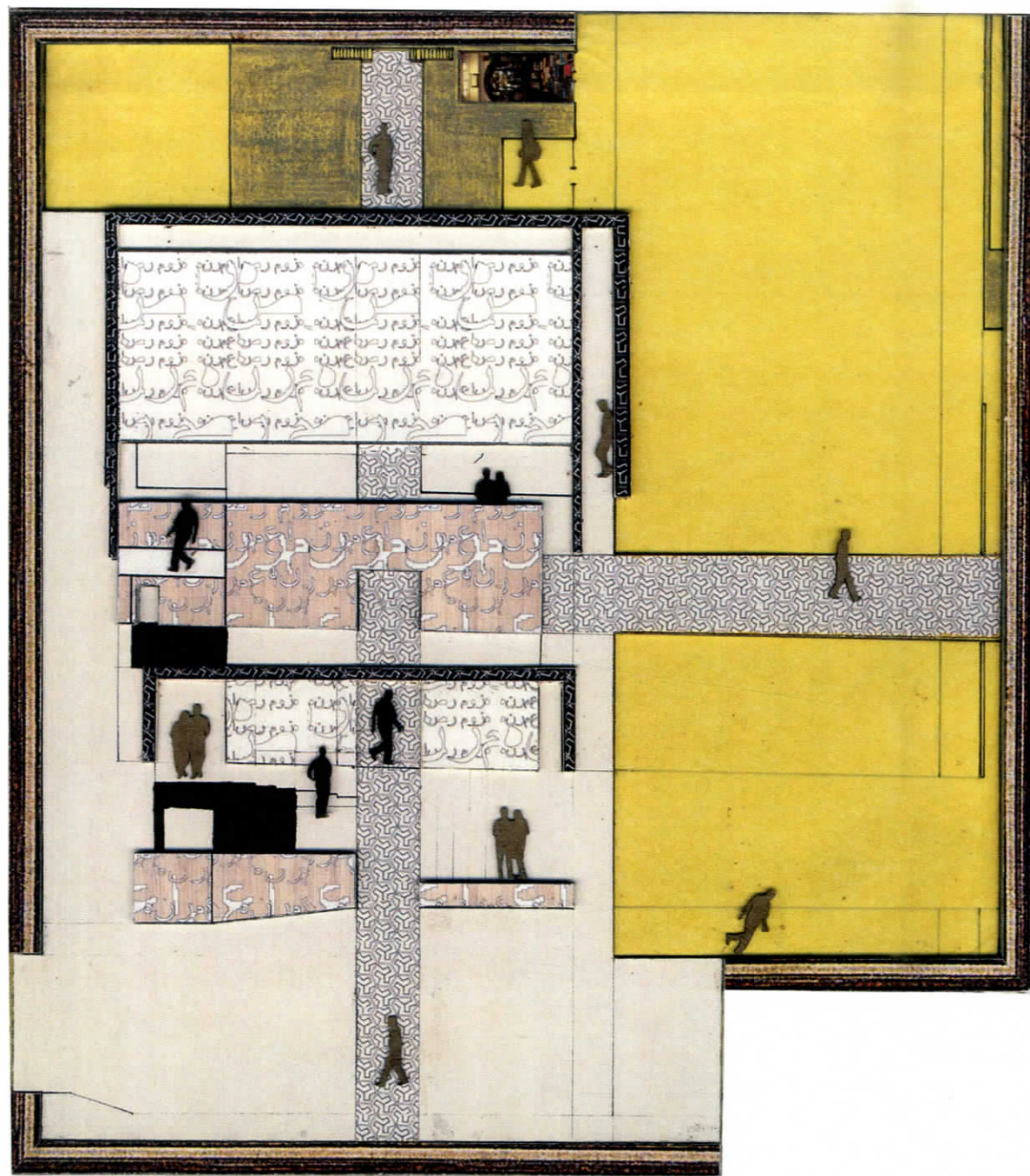


The representational convention employed here cannot be categorized as any one traditional mode of architectural drawing. In these two drawings, a combination of drafting and collage was employed in such a way to evoke the representational strategy of the persian miniatures. Likewise, the drafted portion is somewhat reminiscent of a soldier axonometric, but with a number of distortions for the part of the drawing which contains the architectural intervention. The surrounding areas, characterized by their underlying yellow hue, are presented in plan form.

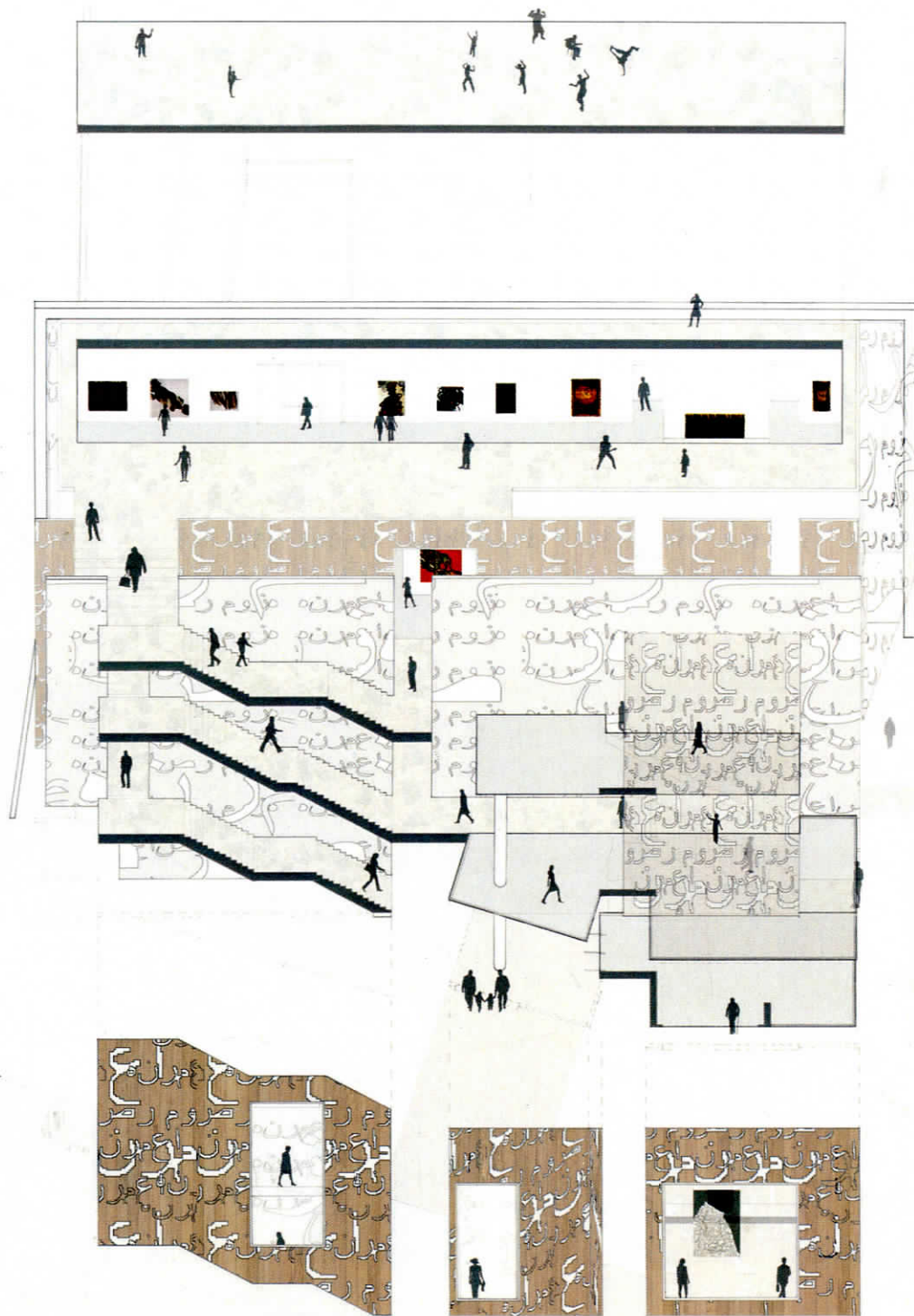
"the hub"

The overall strategy of two buildings ultimately lent itself to two different typological models: a densely striated “urban block” style building and a stepped tower. The two typologies were indicative of the respective buildings titles as well as their performative conditions; the density of “the hub” worked with its programming whilst the stepped condition of “the billboard” formally echoed its namesake and extra-museum function. In both, the concept of the indeterminacy between street and museum; the interlacing of different “worlds” as evidenced in the miniatures considered as precedent is able to be applied through the use of integrating surface conditions.

In that regard, this project encompassed a secondary field of study: material research and development. This resulted in the development of three paving patterns (detail p.88) and two vertical cladding systems. The vertical cladding systems, shown in the drawings on this and the adjacent page as well as throughout the drawings on the following pages are both a wooden screen with pixelated farsi text, such that in close range, it has no meaning, but from a greater distance, the words become legible, and a multi-layered glass system, in which farsi in various scales is overlapped, stretched and distorted in such a way that is true to the miniaturized representation.



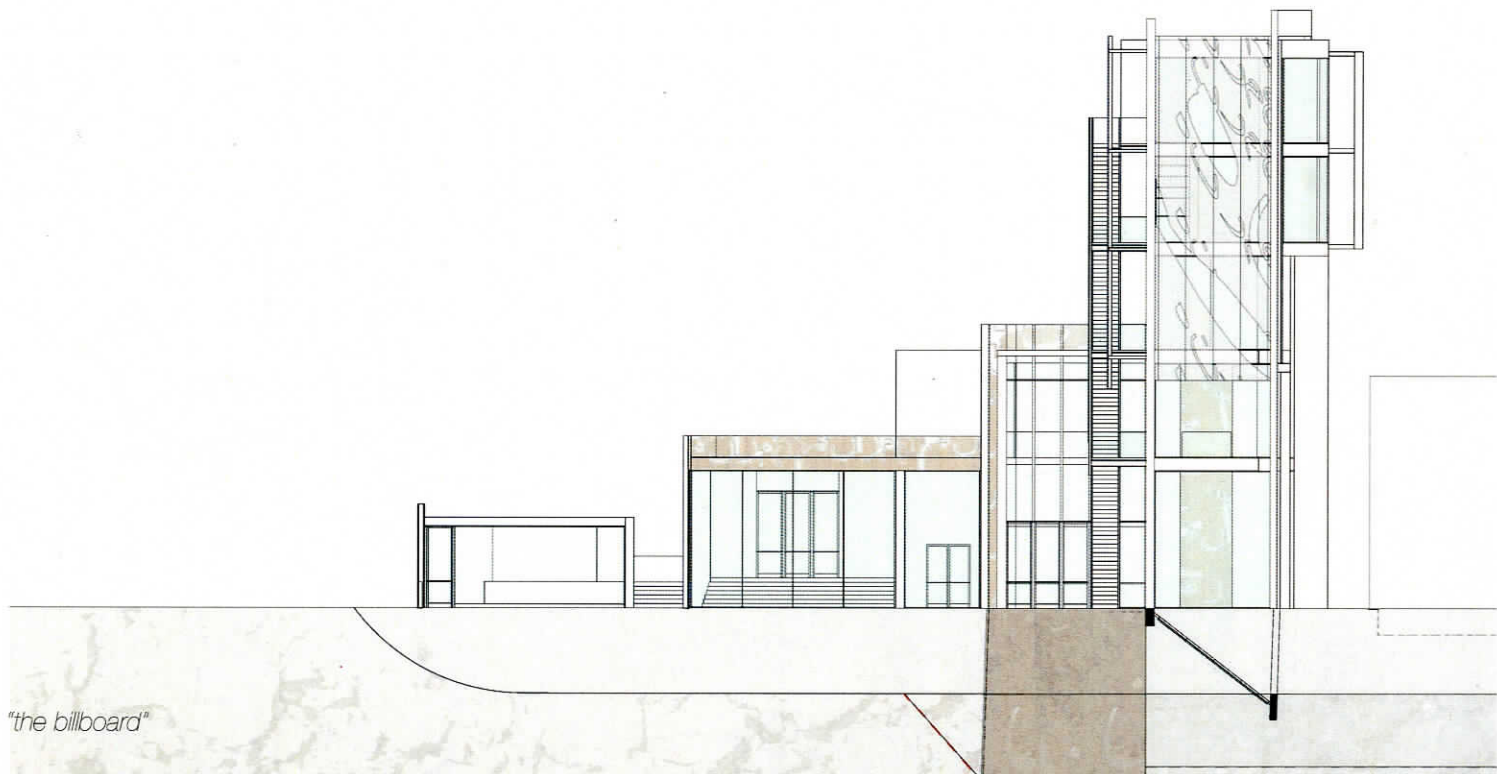
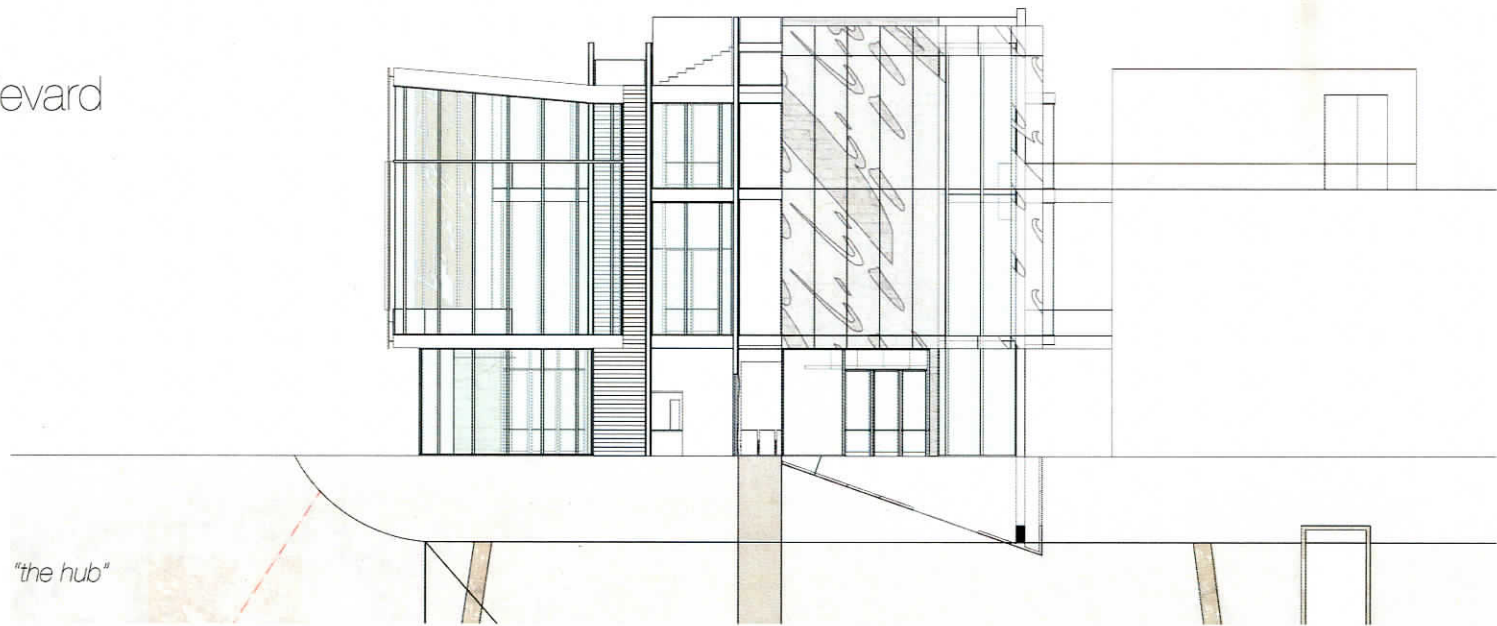
"the billboard"



The paving patterns, to be executed in varying roughnesses of concrete, contain abstracted and literal text in both embedded and printed format. The “pull-in” pattern is the same text from the glass cladding system embedded in rough concrete, while “cross-wouk” is an english-arabic transliteration of the word “crosswalk”, and “the demarcator” works similar to the “pull-in” but with the pixelated text from the wooden cladding system. The paving patterns are a critical part of the site strategy which works to link the two buildings together; the street is to ramp up so that there is no grade change between sidewalk and street; the curb is eliminated. Unlike the surrounding streets which are paved in asphalt, this block-long stretch is to be paved in concrete, such as is used in sidewalks with these embedded textures: the “pull-in” connects the museum buildings into the urban system whilst the “cross-wouk” gives official significance to pedestrian crossings that occur naturally as part of the cultural agency of the site, and “the demarcator” is employed to mark out areas of space within the street that the businesses situated behind them can bleed out into when the street is closed for festivals such as norooz. The intent here is to take the space of the street over by people, potentially as often as every weekend.

interpretive axonometric of “the hub”

elevations
on westwood boulevard



site plan



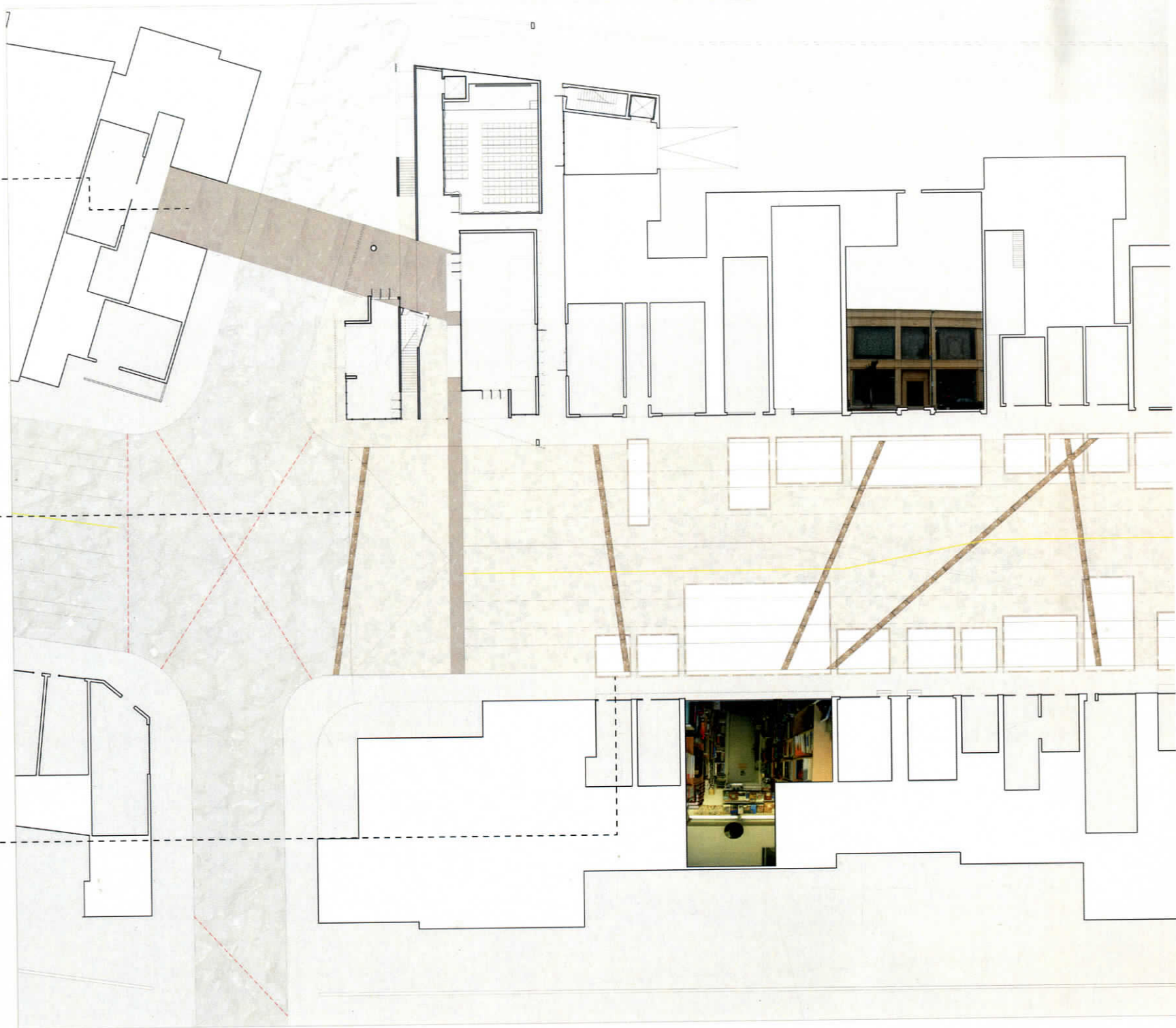
"pull-in"

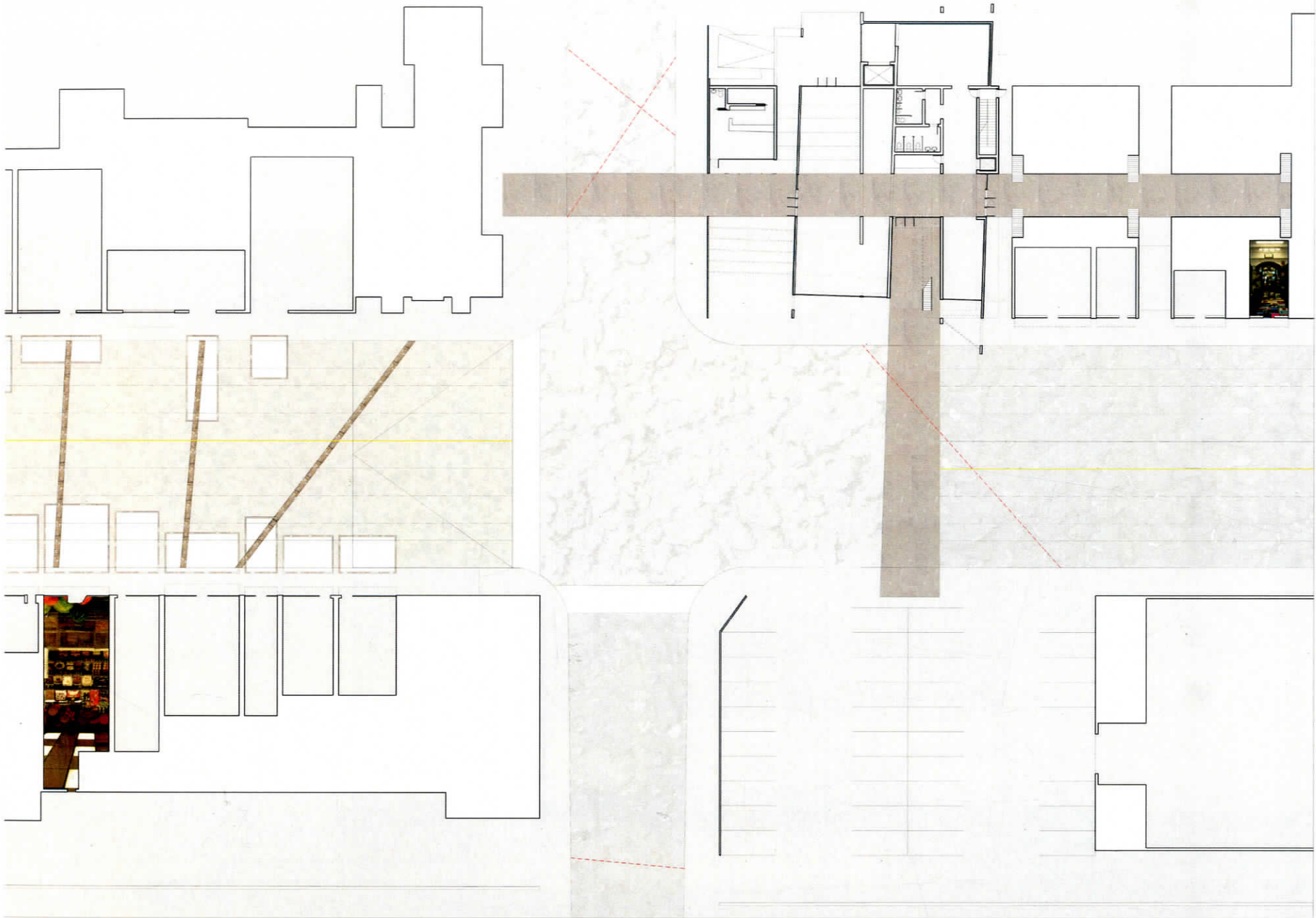


"cross-wouk"

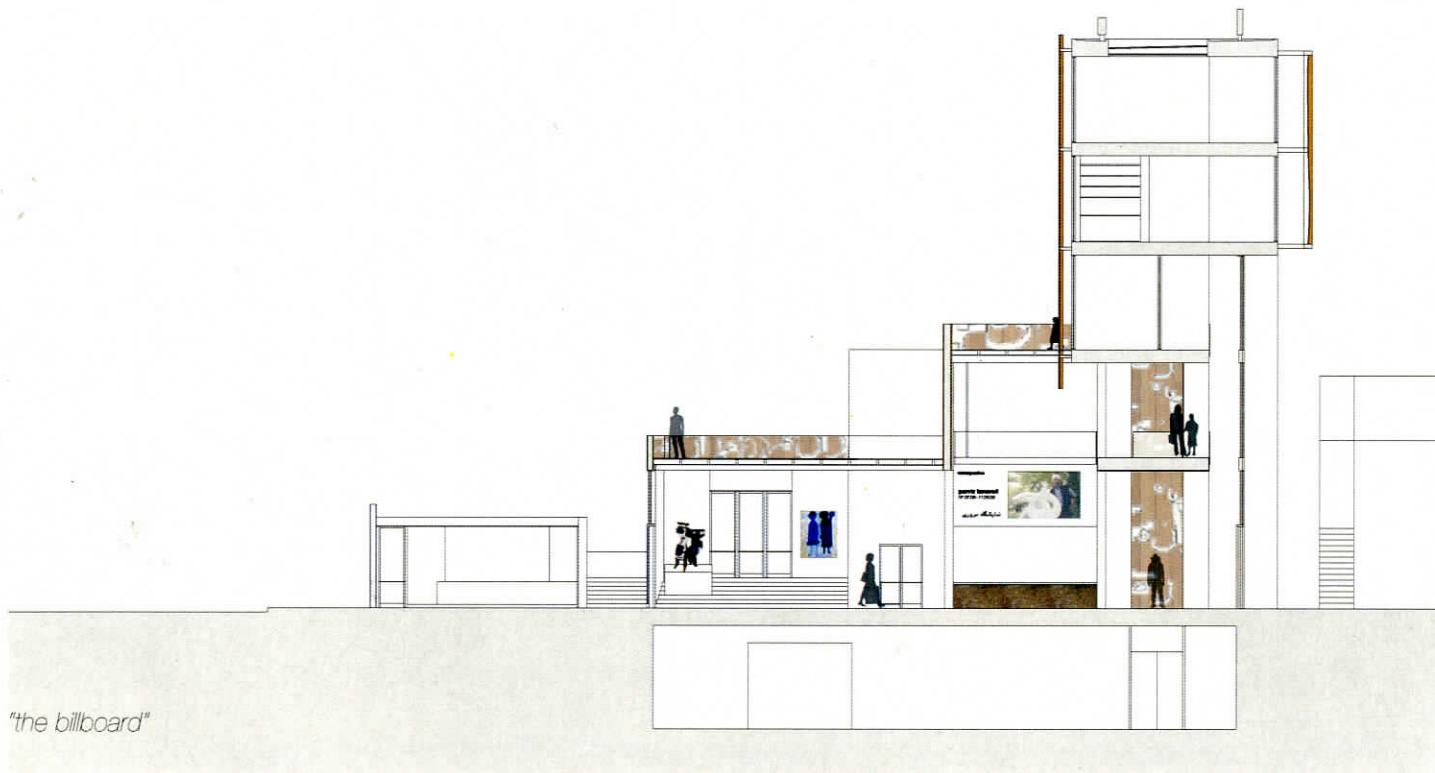
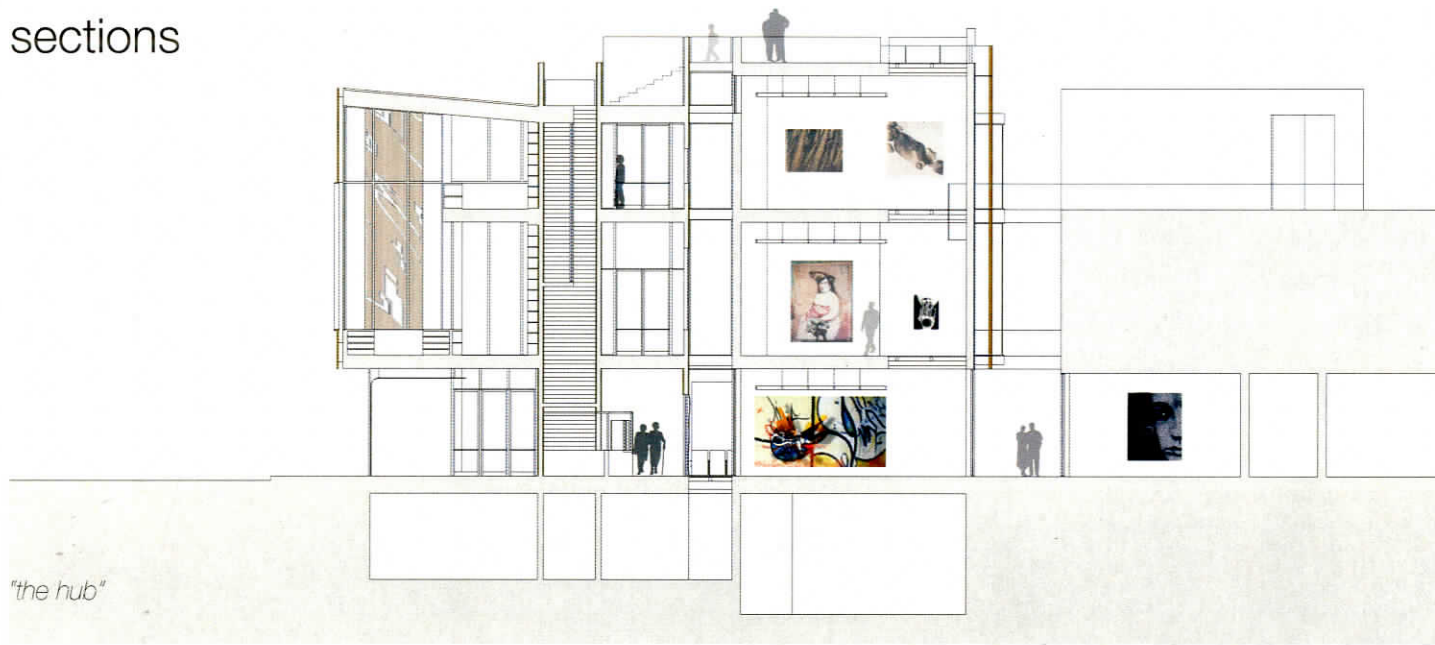


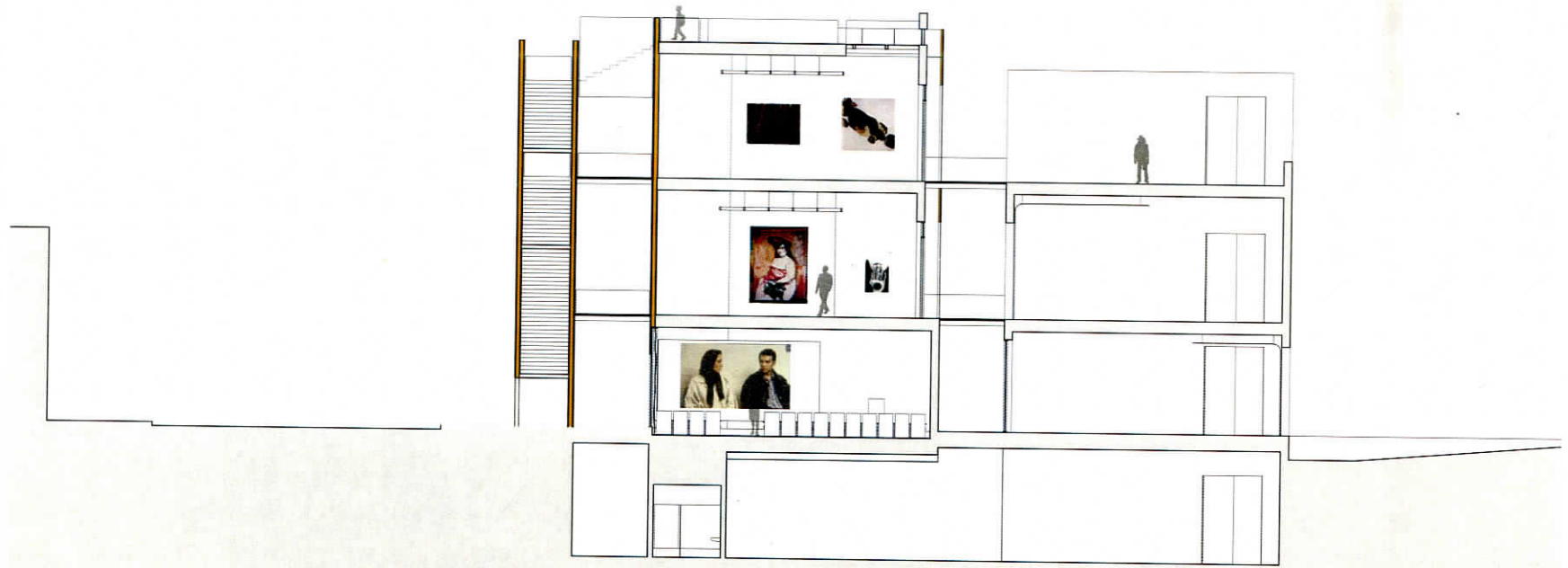
"the demarcator"



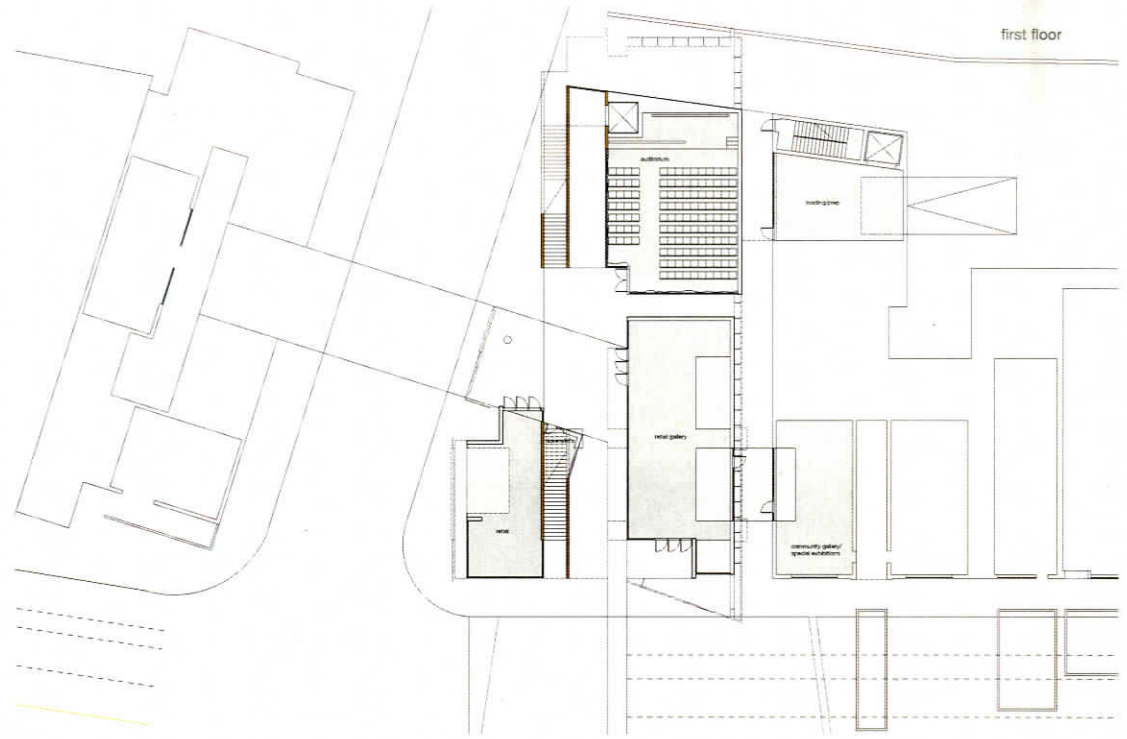


sections

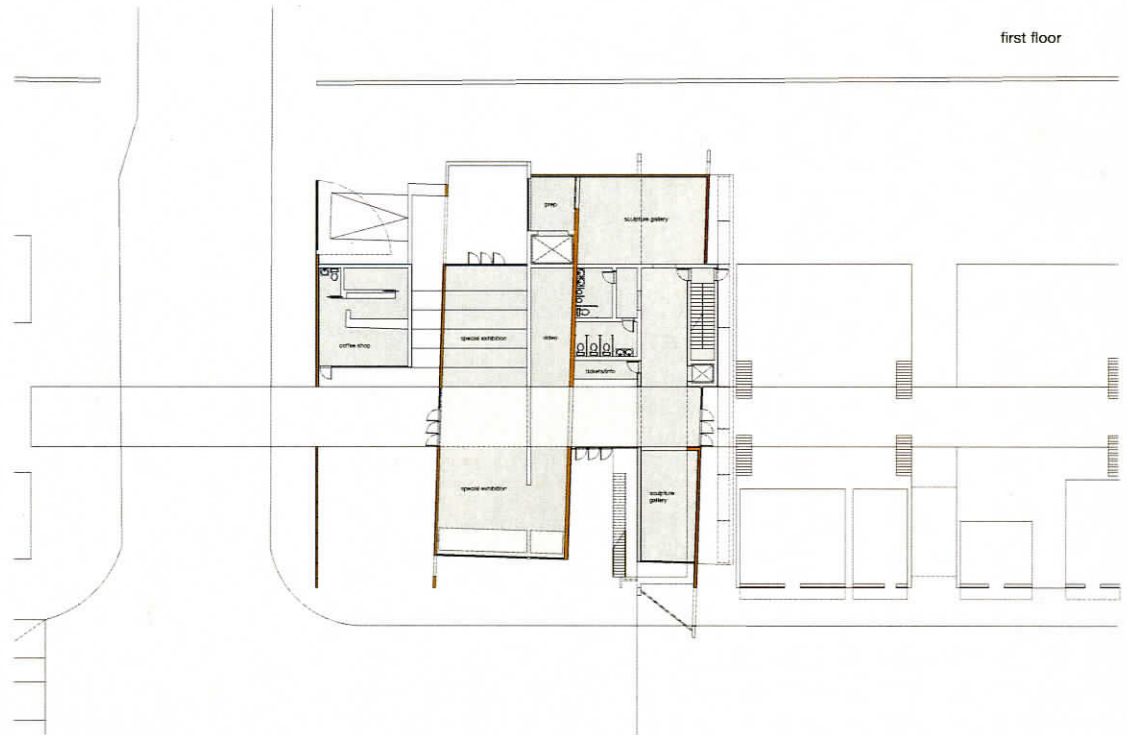


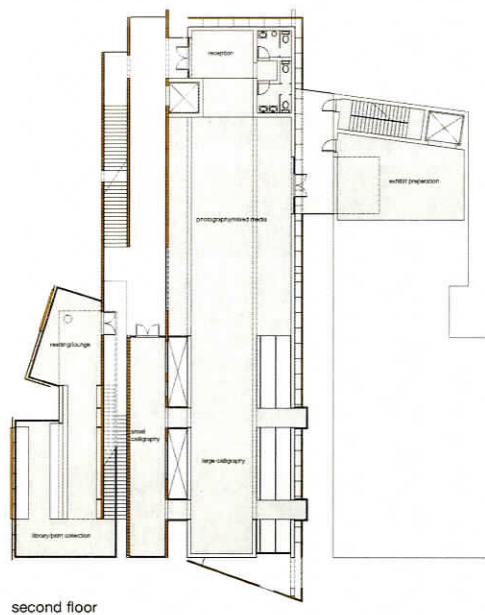


"the hub"

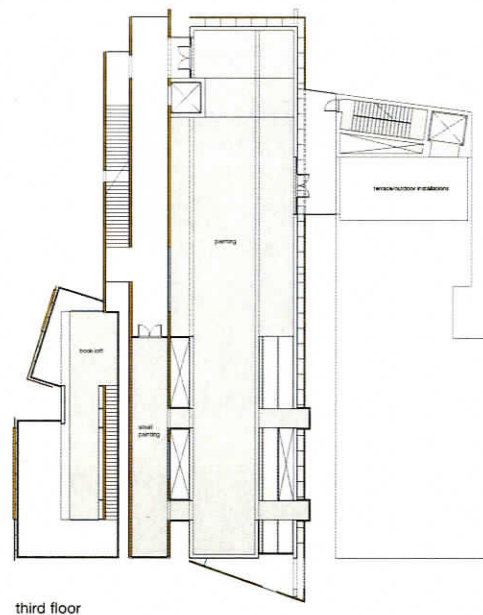


"the billboard"

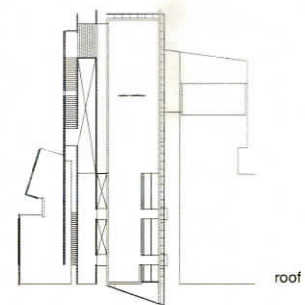




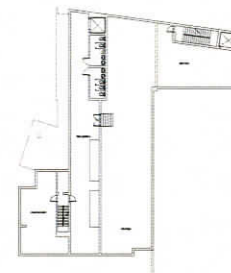
second floor



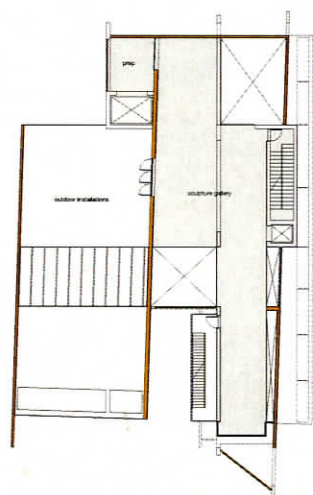
third floor



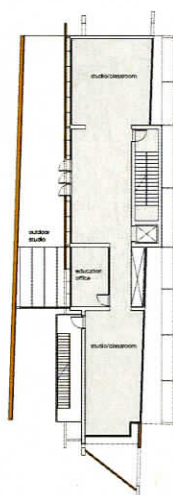
roof



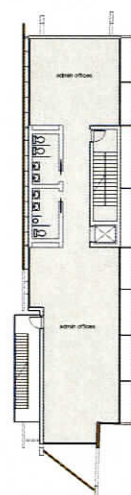
basement



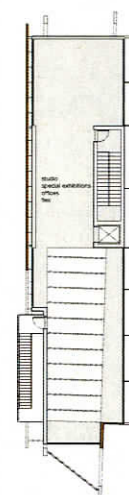
second floor



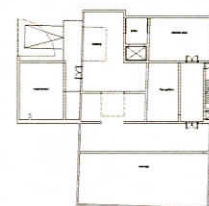
third floor



fourth floor



fifth floor



basement

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Mr. Daryoush Mahboubi

Ms. Cynthia Miller

Numerous local residents and patrons

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